

EPISODE 104

[0:00:09.2] AT: Success is commonly measured by a person's health and their wealth. Today's guest spent much of his life achieving that measure of success. Bu after he experience a tragic accident, he decided that there was more to life than that kind of success. Aaron Walker has learned and now teaches a powerful idea that there is more to life than achieving success. What matters is achieving significance. What's the difference between success and significance? Today, you're going to find out.

Here is Aaron Walker and Jeff Goins.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:00:46.0] JG: Well, Aaron, welcome to the show.

[0:00:47.5] AW: Thanks Jeff, I appreciate you having me on man.

[0:00:50.4] JG: It is an honor. I thank you for being a part of it, thanks for being a friend, you've been so encouraging over I guess probably the past year or so that...

[0:00:59.8] AW: How could you not be encouraged into you man, you're knowing it out of the park. Look what a great job you're doing. That's not hard to support that.

[0:01:08.0] JG: Aaron, I just want to begin by complimenting you and really just setting the tone for the show. When I first met you, you came to a mastermind group that was really inspired by the group that you've been a part of for many years with Dave Ramsey and some other folks there. Thank you for coming to that. I think it just demonstrates your character, you're a very generous guy wants to give back and invest into other people especially young entrepreneurial men and so I'm grateful that you're here.

[0:01:38.1] AW: Yeah, I appreciate that man, you've got a great group of guys, you're hanging out with there and Franklin and it was an honor for me to be there. Thank you for the invite.

[0:01:45.1] JG: Yeah, so, I just want to jump in and I want to talk about the importance of getting the right people around you, you've modelled that really well, you're helping other people do that through some of the programs that you're doing right now. I also want to talk about success and significance and you do a great job of connecting people with their purpose.

I learned the hard way, as did you, that making a bunch of money or being successful, the thing that you think you want to achieve, it will not make you happy, in spite of what most of us believe and what I believed and what I think you believe. So we're going to talk about all that stuff, I think you've got a lot to offer and so I'm glad to have you here.

Before all of that, can we just start with your story. You and I are having this conversation, I'm on one side of Nashville, I think you're on another side of Nashville?

[0:02:35.2] AW: Yeah, Hendersonville right? Yeah, we're pretty close but...

[0:02:39.1] JG: Unless you're traveling. Hendersonville, which didn't Johnny Cash live there at some point?

[0:02:43.4] AW: Yeah, just three miles from my office here, just right down the road.

[0:02:49.2] JG: So let's start with where you came from Aaron because I think that's — it's just a great story and I'd love for you to share a little bit about it.

[0:02:54.1] AW: I appreciate it Jeff. I'd love to share that. Yeah, I'm a native Nashvillian. I was born and raised here, I started really early, started working at 13 years old at a local pawn shop here in Nashville, the Berry Family, been here since 1941, I started working for them, fell in love with that business at 18 years old, I met a couple of guys that had a lot of money, they had been buying a lot of diamonds and gold from me to kind of hedge against inflation, they were in the insurance business at that time.

They had the 21st largest property and casualty company in the country. At the time, I approached those guys and I said, "Listen. I've got five years' experience in this business, I don't have any money." I came from a very humble background, my dad never probably made

over \$15,000 a year in his life. So Jeff, I know all about being broke. I didn't have any money but I had a burning desire to go in to business for myself so I approached these guys and we formed a partnership and three months later we had started our first business.

I was 18 years old. It was very successful, kind of right out of the gate because we worked really hard, you know what that's about, you got to put your time in and then at 21 years old, I opened my second store at 25, my third at 26 my fourth store, I was 27 years old and a company out of Fort Worth, Texas was growing through acquisitions and mergers and they came to me and we reached a price that I was agreeable to and I sold out to a Fortune 500 company.

Robin and I had gotten married two weeks out of high school so we'd gone through this whole process together and I thought, "Man, how good is this? This is like Utopia." I had no money and then 27 years old I got money, I don't have to work anymore and I thought, "Man, it doesn't get any better than this." Well, little did I know, Jeff, it probably wasn't the best decision of my life because I became extremely bored quite honestly and I was getting into bed in the middle of the day.

Robin come woke me up one day about 18 months later and I had gained 50 pounds in 18 months because I wasn't doing anything. She said, "Aaron, you have got to do something," and I said, "I know, I don't have any reason to get up. What am I, going to play golf and fish again?" That gets old quite honestly. People say, "Yeah, I'd like to experience that," but the truth is Jeff, you know it. We've got to have a reason to get up. It can't just be for the money, we've got to have purpose and meaning in our life.

So I went back, went in the pawnshop business with the guy I started with, we built a very successful company over the next 10 years. Met Dave Ramsey, that was 1995, he gave me advertising to train. I thought, "This is pretty cool, this guy's starting this show and he offered me this advertising," and it changed my life in a number of ways. Financially, first of all and second of all we became very good friends and Dave invited me to join his mastermind group and so we spent the last two decades together growing our businesses and learning from each other.

Fast forward 2001, I'm going to work, I'm 40 years old, things are good, I've already sold one business, I've got another one that's very successful, 7:30 in the morning I'm going down

Galaton road in Madison and a pedestrian was crossing the street. Didn't look my way and I ran over him and it killed him. Jeff, I can't even tell you, it was like slow motion. I mean this was like unfolding in front of me like, "I can't believe this."

Anyway, to make a really long story short, Robin and I, my wife got together and we said, "Listen, we're done, we've been chasing money, we've been working hard and we've got enough we don't need to work anymore, we're going to hang it up." We did. I sold that business the second business I owned, I sold it and we took five years off and we traveled, we built another house, we kind of got our feet back under us and then Jeff, she came to me, woke me up from another nap. She said, "You're getting fat and lazy. It's time to go back to work."

So we went into construction business, the guy that built my house did such a great job and I went to him and I said, "Listen, let's take your experience, I've got a marketing background and I got a little bit of money we put into the company and let's grow this thing," and we did. So we spent the next eight years building a very successful construction company, we were number one in middle Tennessee three consecutive years. I turned 50 years old and for the third and final time, I thought, I'd retire again. I said, "I've retired more than the law allows."

So Dave came to me and Dan Miller came to me and they said, "Aaron, you can't quit. I mean what are you going to do? Sit on the front porch and rock yourself into an oblivion?" I started laughing and Dan Miller said, "Come to Innovate," and so I went out there and I was on my way home that night and he texted me and he said, "Aaron, did you see those guys?" And I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "They were leaning in, they were listening."

I said, "Well I'm just a good story teller." He said, "No, you've got something to say man. You've built eight businesses, you and Robin have been married 35 years and you need to coach." I said, "I'm not coaching anybody, I'm done man, I'm finished." Dave Ramsey invited me to Entrée Leadership Master Series, he said, "I'll gift it to you."

Maybe I should have told that, tell your audience not to tell anybody he gave it to me. So I went to it and loved it. Jeff, you're talking about a great program. Then I said, "You know, I'm going to try this." So I started coaching well now man, for the past two or three years, I've been coaching guys all over the country, we now have national and international clients, we lead three

mastermind groups and man I'm getting to help ordinary men become extraordinary. I'm having more fun now than I've ever had in my life.

[0:08:20.9] JG: Yeah, love that. So a couple of detail things I wanted to just clear the air with. You hit this person who was crossing the street, they died, was there any sort of legal repercussions for that?

[0:08:31.6] AW: No there wasn't, and I'll tell you the back story on that too. S the people that were there who testified, he was crossing the street to catch a bus and the bus driver had warned this guy, he was 77 years old, they had warned this guy repetitively, "You're going to get hit one day, you keep running out in front of traffic like that." Well we found out later, he couldn't see well, he just didn't see me. So when he crossed the street he got to the median and he hesitated like he was waiting on me to pass and I sped back up to pass just like anybody would.

This all happened in like a nanosecond. As soon as I got to him, he took off running and I just hit him, he lived three days in the Vanderbilt trauma unit and unfortunately passed away. My legal council said, "Don't contact the family," well the first thing I did was contact the family. How do you do that and not contact the family, right? They said, "Listen Mr. Walker, we know it was an accident, everyone that saw it testified to it, there is no legal ramifications that's going to come of this. Thank you for paying your condolences," and that's the last I've talked to them, I haven't talked to them since.

But I had to call and apologize and offer my condolences. Well here's what happened to me Jeff through that. What happens is, I realized through this accident that I'm leaving a legacy, it's just, what is my legacy going to be? I started doing this deep evaluation, a kind of a personal assessment if you will of my personal life and I started thinking, "You know? I've been a good dad, I've been a good husband but outside of that I hadn't really done anything outside of myself.

My legacy would be "Aaron made some money, he was good to his family" but that's the extent of it. I started thinking, I have been successful but I hadn't been significant. Dave Ramsey and I went on vacation with our wives down to Emilia island, we heard Bob Buford speaking and he's the author of the book called *Half Time*. I read that book and I'm like, "This is so true. We spend

the majority of our life chasing after possessions yet we spend very little of our time chasing after significance, there's really nothing there." I said, "That's so true for me." I spend 12 hours a day trying to make a living and we get a beach house or we get a mountain house, we get a big car, we get all this stuff and it's good but I learned that we need contentment, not complacency but we need to learn to be content and happiness is a choice, not a trait.

We think we'll be happy when we get this or when we get over there, when we get one more store, make another hundred thousand dollars, then we'll be happy. I'm like, "No, that's not true." That accident brought to the forefront of my mind, "What if that would have been me? What if I had gotten killed at 40 years old, what would people have said? What difference will I have made in the community?" And I thought, "I haven't."

My whole focus has been for the past 15 years, I want to be successful because I love making money. There's nothing wrong with making money, people that's got money says, money doesn't matter, they're liars. It does matter, but don't make it the primary focus. Look outward a little bit and try to be successful and I want you to be but there is a real room there to be significant as well. I teach people how to do this every day.

[0:11:40.8] JG: After you hit this person, not to dwell on this but I'm just trying to empathize with the experience, was it easy for you to move on?

[0:11:50.5] AW: No. You don't get over that.

[0:11:53.4] JG: I just want to — I would struggle with that and...

[0:11:57.5] AW: Yeah, I still struggle with it, it's 15 years ago and I still struggle with it and the truth is, you don't get over killing somebody whether it's your fault or not. You don't get over that. God just extends the grace to you to be able to deal with it. That's what he's done, as a Christ follower, I know of his grace and his mercy and he's extended that and he's bestowed that upon me. I'm able to deal with that.

Now listen, let me just tell you this, if your listeners don't hear anything but this, man, be careful when you're driving. I know man, these phones and texting, all that kind of stuff, thankfully I

wasn't doing anything I shouldn't have been doing, right? Man, pay attention because that can be anybody's dad, anybody's child and I can promise you, after going through this, if it had been my fault, I probably would be in a fetal position today.

I just want to encourage your listener's man, pay attention out there because it can happen to anybody at a moment's notice. So yeah, I had to work through that, we had a counsellor here that I went to and Robin and I went together to work through that, and it was a long time. I had guys at my church that counselled me and consoled me and walked thought it, there was a pastor of a mega church here locally that called me because the same thing had happened to him.

He kind of walked through that with me and he said, "I know exactly where you're at and I sympathize with what's going on," and he gave me some good counsel and yeah even now you think about it, it's like somebody's dad and so the story gets a little bit more unique and I'll just fast-forward. So My dad dies, that was in 2001, my dad dies in 2006. He's in the ICU the last two weeks of his life and I'm there with him each day and so I leave to go get lunch and I come back, my mom's acting real weird and I say, "What's going on?"

She said, "Well, nothing." I said, "No, I want to know. What did they tell you?" I thought it was something about my dad. She said, "Well," she pointed out the glass windows and the little room he was in in ICU she goes, "You see that lady standing there?" I said, "Yeah." She said, "She was telling us about her dad getting killed," and I sat there and listed and she said, "It was the guy you hit, and this nurse is taking care of your dad."

[0:14:13.2] JG: My goodness.

[0:14:14.1] AW: I'm like, "Are you serious?" Well I never told her who I was, my parents never told her either that it was me because that would have been weird and the ironic part is, is she took care of my dad the last two weeks of his life. I never got to meet her, I never introduced myself to her, we just never know how these things are going to pan out through our life. Well, through that, the experience just came that life is fragile and we need to really live each day like it's our last. We need to do the things. We don't need to put off and we don't need to say, "We're going to be happy when ____." Choose today, elect today to be happy.

[0:14:54.9] JG: Yeah. So one of the things that I have recognized and this really came about through interviewing a lot of people for my latest book, is it often took something painful, something difficult, something tragic sometimes, a relative dying, your kid getting cancer, before somebody could connect with their purpose. It seems they had to go through something really jarring and your story is an example of this.

But I was sharing this with a friend of mine and this really healthy, positive successful guy who is 30 something. He said, "Do you think you have to do that? Do you think you have to hit rock bottom before you figure out what life is about?" It seems to be not to make light of it but you kind of hit rock bottom a couple of times, "I'm back on the couch, I'm fat again, my wife's telling to go something."

[0:15:50.3] AW: Right, right. We don't have to though.

[0:15:51.4] JG: Yeah, so talk a little bit about that because you coach people and I think one of the things that you're doing and that it seems to me that you feel a burden for is, "I want to help you avoid some of the mistakes that I've made." Even when you and I met, one of the things you said to me that stuck with me immediately and I don't know, we didn't know each other that well but you just kind of spoken into my life and you said, "You know, one of the most dangerous things for a man to have is too much money and too much time on his hands."

[0:16:17.5] AW: It will get you in trouble if you're not careful.

[0:16:19.6] JG: I knew exactly what you were talking about because who am I accountable to throughout the day? I go to work but there's nobody checking in on me, I could do anything or nothing or everything and that really spoke to me. Because I knew this is important for my marriage, for my health, for my life, the work that I do, I need to be accountable.

So you're helping people avoid certain mistakes and failures that they don't have to go through. But what would you say to that, do you have to hit rock bottom before you figure it out?

[0:16:49.7] AW: No, you don't at all and I wished I had had some trusted advisers in my life when I was 27 years old. Here's a funny thing Jeff, if you had known me in my 20's, early 30's, you wouldn't have me on your show, first of all. Because I was pretty cocky, quite honestly, I was a little bit arrogant because I'm thinking, "Hey man, everything I touch turns to gold. I've built this business, I've sold to a fortune 500 company, I don't have to work," you know what I'm saying? You start reading your own press clippings and I'm like, "That's really dangerous."

I look back now, so I'm helping guys. The first thing I tell them is, "Get people around you." Even today, this morning, this is a Thursday we're recording this, this morning, 6 o'clock, I met with three guys at a local restaurant, we do ever Thursday morning 6 o'clock, it's my accountability group. There's nothing those guys won't ask me, there's nothing I won't ask them, there's nothing I hold back. I would be embarrassed to admit a lot of things and say a lot of things to the general populous but to these guys, I share my fears, I share my struggles, my trials, I'm totally transparent. I want to do the right thing.

Well most people won't subject themselves to that kind of scrutiny. It's a very dangerous place to be when you don't have people that are asking you pointed questions. Especially the more successful you get because then you can do anything. Nobody is the keeper of the clock and no one's the keeper of your money and you can do and come and go as you please. I remember my mom, as a kid, she'd say, "The idle mind, it's the devil's workshop," and I'd start laughing and I'd say, "You know, that's really true." So we need to be really careful.

Being involved in a mastermind group tow here I had 10 guys around me all the time that we met weekly that I was able to share over a decade with, every Wednesday morning for an hour and a half. We met in Dave's office and it changed my life completely because there is no façades in there, it's like hey, they'll get through those façades in a hurry you know, they'll call you out in a minute. One of the guys in there is named James Ryle, he was a Promise Keepers speaker, spoke all over the world. He was one of the members in there and one Saturday morning, I get a phone call and it's James.

We never talked to each other on the weekends and I was going through a really tough time in my life right then. I mean seriously, it was a dark time, there was some stuff I was going through that was really dark and I couldn't get over it, I don't know Jeff if you've ever experienced that or

not but it was like I was stuck. I mean I just couldn't get over it. I get this phone call and I look down, I'm at ACE hardware and it's James Ryle and I said, "Hold on James, let me walk out the parking lot where I can hear you.:"

I walked outside and I said, "Okay," I'm thinking this is going to be good because James, when he says something, it's like got impact, you know? I said, "Okay James, I can hear now, what is it?" He goes, "Well the Lord gave me a word for you," and I said — I was excited, I was like, I thought he was prophesying. I said, "Okay, what is it?" He goes, "Well, you're worrying the hell out of everybody around you."

The phone just went silent and I said, "Excuse me?" I started laughing, I said, "No really, what?" He said, "No, really. I'm serious, nobody wants to be around you." I said, "Well James, I'm sorry, I don't understand." He said man, Aaron, this thing that you're dealing with, listen, you've been talking about this forever." He said, "This morning I was reading in the book of Isaiah and it says, take the chains from around your neck and move on."

He said, "I want to tell you it's time, you need to move on." He said, "I'll see you, I got to go," and hung up. I'm standing there Jeff, I want to bite a nail in two. I was so mad, then I started thinking, "You know what? This guy loves me enough to tell me the truth." I don't know where I would be today had he not made that phone call. He has invested the time, the effort and the energy in my life, he had permission to say that. Well if you isolate yourself and you don't have trusted advisers that are non-biased. People that can give you advice and berate in to your life that don't have anything to gain or lose by what they tell you, there's no telling where you'll go.

The adverse to that is is if you absolutely want to go to the next level, those guys get around you that held your arms up, they help you, they encourage you, they give you the resources, the relationships, the encouragement, the edification to move forward and your life can be radically different. See, so you can get both. You can get the help and you can get the reprimands when you need it. All I'm saying is, you need those guys, invite those guys into your life whether it be a small group or a big group. For me, that's one of the biggest things that's been a game changer in my life. Surrounding myself with people that really breathe into me.

[0:21:22.5] JG: I agree. I've talked about this before on other show so you can dig in t the archives if you're listening to this and find an episode about masterminds, I've talked to other people about this. We've done a few episodes on this just because it's so important and as you know Aaron, I joined a mastermind three years ago now and that has been the single best decision I've made both for personal and professional development.

And I often hear from people, one of two questions. One, "How do I get to know these famous or successful or influential people that you know?" Or two, "How do I just find people like that in my neighborhood in my town?" How do you respond to that because you know both.

[0:22:01.4] AW: Yeah.

[0:22:02.6] JG: You got a great opportunity to be in this mastermind of people like Dan Miller, Dave Ramsey, I mean, just incredible people.

[0:22:08.9] AW: You know what though? Do you remember when I said I met those guys 1995, you know what? Dave Ramsey had to introduced himself to me, he gave me advertising to try and Dave Ramsey is not the Dave Ramsey in 1995 that he is today. Now there's 450 employees, he's on 800 stations. Dan Miller just started 48 Days to the Work You Love. Ken Abraham is in our group, has a hundred books to his credit, number one Times New York's seven times now. He wasn't then. Everybody says, "Man, I'd be in those groups too if I..." We;; they were just normal guys then.

[0:22:44.5] JG: Yeah, interesting.

[0:22:45.5] AW: Okay. Well, that shows you the power of the mastermind. Look what these guys have done with their collective energy because you are a direct result of the five people you spend the most time with. That is nothing — there is no secret to that. That's the reason I'm saying, get with people that have the same objectives, the same character, they're honest, their moral and go forward.

They can be very diverse, they don't have to be wealthy people, they have to be people with the same objective. Just get together and go forward. I want you to be successful. Listen Jeff. I'm all

about controlling my own schedule, I want to have financial freedom, I want to have an engaging family, great relationships. I want to do all those things, we all want to have a successful life. But I also want to meet the needs of others and I want to learn to fully engage with people, I want to help others when they can't repay me.

I want to be able to be available to others even when it's not convenient for me. I want to give above the minimal requirements, I want to do things for other people to edify and to lift them up. When you do that, the natural porosity out of that and we've done all of our businesses this way. When you give, you give, you give like Gary Vaynerchuk says, now you have permission to ask. If we'll structure our lives and our business that way, my goodness, how successful you can be.

[0:24:05.3] JG: Aaron, do you think you have to be successful before you can start giving back and finding that significance because we hear this, we hear people become millionaires and go, "Oh, it's not about the money, let me go start a charity," or whatever. What do you think about that?

[0:24:20.0] AW: I talk about giving a lot because I like to give and people tell me, they say, "You know Aaron, if I had your kind of money I would give too." You know what I say to them? "No you wouldn't, because money doesn't change your heart, it magnifies what's already there." If you're not doing it today on some small scale, it doesn't cost anything to go help somebody for two hours.

It doesn't cost anything to smile at somebody to encourage them and to pick them up. It doesn't cost anything to do endorsements and video endorsements, LinkedIn endorsements, it doesn't cost anything to reach out and do an email or a thank you card. If you're not doing those things now, do you think you'd give \$100,000 to some endowment if you had a million dollars? No, you would not. It's a matter of the heart.

See we have to train ourselves to be generous in all areas. Not just when you get money. Second of all, you got to define what success is. A lot of people do that monetarily speaking. There's a lot of things, joy, peace, harmony, being content, being able to dream and establish goals, there's a lot of other measurements for success outside of finances.

[0:25:28.0] JG: That's true. I'm glad you said that because I have experienced I guess the other side to that. Meaning, as our income has grown, it has become harder not easier to give. I admit that with trepidation but I realize, we had some habits in terms of giving but my wife and I got married and her dad was like, "How are you going to pay for my daughter — how are you going to support her?" Because I made I think probably \$17,000 that year and I was like, "With love."

[0:26:03.2] AW: "I'm going to love her, that's how." Listen, I'm a dad of two daughters, that's not the answer a dad wants to hear, I promise.

[0:26:11.1] JG: Yeah, I realize that now.

[0:26:15.4] AW: Your definition of that's going to change as well.

[0:26:18.1] JG: Yeah, we had to learn how to give out of very little and then over time, we've had to give out more but I have felt that. I have felt the purse strings tighten as I have acquired more. Being somebody who believes in giving, who used to fund raise his own salary for working for a nonprofit like I should have no reason why I shouldn't be generous and yet as I have achieved more and succeeded more and we've made more money as a family. I've realized with this, there's been a magnification of my own heart. I go, "Oh no, I'm greedy here or I'm selfish here."

You're absolutely right, thanks for saying that and I'm aware of that and it is really true. I think we've seen that, I've seen that. If you ever see somebody become really, really successful, they don't actually change, I think they become more of who they really want to be but maybe socially can't be or they lack the accountability or any of that.

[0:27:11.9] AW: It's like sports, you know they say that sports creates character and I say, "No it doesn't, it reveals it." It's the same thing with money. I want to encourage you to do a few things that Robin and I have been doing our whole marriage, is look for opportunities to do random acts of kindness.

We do this regularly. Also we even plan activities for our grandchildren, we'll go to restaurants and we'll pick out tables anonymously and we'll pick up those people's dinner. My grandchildren

are learning to be generous, and the day after Thanksgiving, we do gratitude day where we'll go to the nursing homes and give you candy with the grandchildren and the hospital and give out presents and last year my little seven year old granddaughter came up and they called me Big A.

She said, "Big A, this has been the funnest day of my life." I'm like, we miss opportunities as adults that we can do that each and every day and the children can only do it when we allow or help them do it. We need to be teaching our children more Jeff to be generous

[0:28:06.1] **JG:** Yeah, I appreciate that. I've got a three year old and I've been thinking a lot about that. One of the interesting things about him Aaron is, unlike myself and maybe your kids, my son isn't growing up with commercials. We don't watch a ton of TV but he has a couple of shows that he watches. Usually just record those on the DVR and then just watch the shows later but sometimes he'll watch a show live and there will be commercials on the Disney channel or whatever.

This just happened in the past six months and they flash this commercial on there and it could be for a girl's my little pony thing. I don't know if they still do my little pony or not, and he'll go, "I want that. I want that." And I'm like, "Where did this come from?" Already I'm seeing that our culture just indoctrinates kids to be inwardly focused, self-centered and I'm realizing that we're going to have to be really intentional to help him build an other centered world view, so I appreciate you sharing that.

We've talked a little bit about getting around the right people. You help people do this, you work with mastermind groups of men to help them succeed. How do you practically get started with something like that? How do you get around the right people? Are there practical steps that you can take to find your group of Dave Ramsey, Dan Miller and Aaron Walker?

[0:29:23.0] **AW:** Yeah, I appreciate that. View From the Top is the name of my company and so there's a number of things that we do Jeff to kind of help people understand who they are. We go through what's called a personal assessment. I walk these guys through this where you really uncover your identity and your ideals and we talk about your faith and your relationships

and your career and your family and they're really pointed questions that really dig down to the heart of who you are as an individual.

The second thing that I do with guys on a regular basis that the majority of people don't do, Robin and I elected to do this when we first got married, and we've continued through 36 years of marriage now, is, "What do I want?" It's a question most people don't take the time to answer. You ask most people that question, they want something bigger, brighter, shinier, faster, more. "Those are the general answers that you get and I said, "No, no, no, hold on. If you were to get up tomorrow morning with no limitations, no restrictions, either financially or geographically, what would you do with your life?"

Most people can't answer that question. Or I'll say, "Well hold on, what about in 90 days, what do you want to accomplish? In five years, how do you want to live your life? When you're an empty nest, what kind of income stream do you want? Where do you want to live?" We don't take time to live intentionally. We live most of our lives reactively. We go out and work hard as we can and we get money and then we create the life. I'm just saying that's backwards. Just decide with blinders on, don't compare yourself to the Jones or the Smiths. What do you and Ms. Goins want to do?

Robin and I elected a long time ago you know, there's something's that we want very simple, there's certain things that we want just easy. Greg McCowen wrote a great book, *Essentialism*. It's a great book, it helps you get the non-essentials out of the way and really focus on the vital few things that are important. You need to ask yourself those questions. "What's really important to me? Is it family, is it giving, is it generosity? Is it the children, what's important to me?" And you design your life around that and then you go, "Okay, I've got to create this kind of income stream in order to do that? Then you got to ask yourself, why do I want to make more money? What am I going to do with that? Is that going to make my life bigger and if so, is that going to make my life better as a result of it?"

You've just got to sit down and ask yourself these difficult questions and I do that with people. I sit down and a lot of guys go, "You know what? Really? I'm making enough money," it's just that my dad used to say, "Son, I just know what to want," and that's what people need to determine, don't let other people decide that for you, decide it on your own and then go through, write out a

plan of action, we're really big on writing and dating it. Say, "At this point in time, this is where I want to be." You shoot to do that together. You need to plan this together too. I encourage couples, sit down on your porch, take some coffee, take multiple afternoons and really design the life that you want to live. Once you've crafted that, I can help you create a plan to achieve it.

[0:32:24.1] JG: Would you recommend doing that before you figure out, who do I want to be around? Who are the people that are going to help me achieve this? Because that is the question I hear a lot, "How do I get into one of those masterminds? Nothing like that exists where I am. How do I create a group like that?"

[0:32:39.1] AW: Yeah, we're very intentional about the people we want to associate with in regards to personally and professionally. We literally have Google documents with the names, the addresses, the dates we contact them, it's very intentional for us. We don't just sit around and go, "Well I wonder" — we intentionally go to events to where the people are at, we want to be around, we go to conferences where we want to hear people speak.

We reach out to the Jeff Goins of the world and say, "Man, I want to be involved in your circle. You're the champion guy in the writing space and I want to be in your arena." We'd make an effort to get in there, we promote you, we help you, we tweet you out, we put you on Facebook, we compliment you, we endorse you, we want to serve you. See, that's the big thing is don't have the mentality, hey Jeff, what can you do for me?

I've grown eight businesses over the past 37 years, all of them have been service oriented. What can I do to help you get to where you want to go? If you do that, the natural reciprocity, people want to be around you as a direct result of it. Be very intentional about the people that you're around. Most people will say, "I'm going to go get around that Jeff Goins, he'll introduce me to Andy Traub or," you know what I'm saying? Or vice versa.

[0:33:54.8] JG: I try to introduce nobody to Andy Traub.

[0:33:59.1] AW: Careful now. I'm just saying that you got to be very intentional about the life you want to live and if you want to be around successful, and you want to have successful things, you got to be around successful people and you've got to make an intentional move in order to

do that. They're not going to come to you, people asked me once, there was a podcast, I was on and they said, "How did you get on there?" I said, "I called him and asked." You got to make your way, somebody said one time, "You're 18 years old and you went in business?" I said, "Yeah because I went and asked those guys." Listen, the answer is always no, unless you ask. So don't be afraid to fail. For me it's not failing, it's either learning or you succeed and pivot and go do the next thing. It's not a matter of failure.

Fear missing an opportunity more than you fear failure. Right? The neighbors, they're not talking about you anyway. We let that hold us back all the time, "I'm afraid of what they might say." Well they're not saying anything. Just go out there and go for it. Failure is in not trying. Not in not succeeding. I used to tell my girls all the time man, I couldn't lay in bed at night and think, "Could I have done it, could I have written that novel, could I have written that book?" Well go for it. Iterate, do it again, it may not be great the first time. Listen, go for it. There's so much life to be lived, it's so fun to try. I would just encourage your listeners' today man. Go out there and set an agenda of who you want to be around, how you want to be around, invest the time, energy and effort, you can succeed just like they did.

[0:35:27.0] JG: That's great Aaron. Can you talk, as we wrap up here, can you talk about business for the beginner? Because I was somebody who fell into entrepreneurship, it was not something that I felt like I had any natural ability or knack or interest for. It was just something where I thought, "Well, I probably won't make a ton of money as a writer and so how can I start this online business, I've been hearing a lot about that?" My wife was pregnant with our first kid, diapers cost money, I didn't make much of that.

So I was like, "Well, maybe I could figure this out?" And lo and behold, now we have a pretty successful business that supports the lifestyle that we want to live and as we all talk about this, people go, "Oh no, no. I don't know anything about business or marketing or this or that." Now, granted, not everybody needs to be an entrepreneur but more and more people are flirting with the idea of starting an online business or they realize they have advice or knowledge or skills that they can offer the world and it's a lot easier to get started, to get into the game because of the way the internet connects people. I mean the work that you had to do 37 years ago and the work that I have to do, it's very, very different. You were fighting an uphill battle.

[0:36:46.7] AW: I thought it was. I wished I'd had the internet 35 years ago.

[0:36:49.9] JG: It's incredible, yeah. That's what I tell my younger siblings and friends, "Start a side business, figure this out because it's so easy and it creates freedom for you." What would you say to the person because you're so entrepreneurial, I'm bought in, what about the person who goes, "Yeah, but I don't know." What do you think about that?

[0:37:08.8] AW: Early on, I'll attribute this to my mom, she had a little saying when I was a kid and she had said, "Can't, couldn't do it and could did it all." It used to make me mad because she said, she wouldn't allow us to say can't, she goes, "You might not be able to do it but you're going to try." Well that developed a little bit of self-esteem and some confidence in me because I will try some things and they would work.

Then I started thinking, "Well I can do this." So I go out there and attempt it. Here's the thing, Carol Dweck said in her book, *Mindset*, "You might not be able to do it today but that doesn't mean you can't learn," and they did a study with people that said they weren't artist. Five days they gave them intense study, they gave him an intent instruction. Five days later, it looked like a different person had drawn the bust of this thing that they had up.

Same way with writing. I'm sure, "I can't write." Well you spent five days with Jeff Goins, an intense writing you could write better, right? It's not that you can't, you can't write now. In the same way with no means to me, that means no today. That doesn't mean no forever. So you've got to develop a mindset in that. Gay Hendricks wrote a great book, *The Big Leap*, talks about our upper limit challenges.

Listen, we are our worst enemy, ourselves. Because in our mind, we defeat ourselves and so change your mindset, think, "How can I? Who can I get around? What can I learn? How can I take Jeff's instruction and learn how to be a better writer? What can I do? Let me follow him, he's done it, he's been there," I hire coaches all the time. I've hired LinkedIn coaches, I've hired personal coaches, I've hired psychological coaches. If I don't know how to do it, hire somebody that does know how to do it.

If you can't afford it, there's all kinds of resources online, get on there but get it out of your mind. Can't. You can if you want to. The biggest thing is Jeff, people don't know how to delay gratification. That's the biggest hurdle, they want it now. It's like, "Give it to me today." When Robin and I started this business when I was 18 years old, you're not going to believe this, most people don't, that's okay, I'm good with that. We took \$18,000 a year for nine years. We had two children during that period of time.

That was 35 years ago, so I don't know what that's equivalent to today but you know what we did, we put all the money back into the business. You know what happened? I grew something big enough that a Fortune 500 company wanted it. I could have had a bigger car, nicer house and all those things, right out of the gate but we said, "We don't want to do that, we're going to live very modest and we're going to put all the money back into the company and we're going to build something." Like Dave Ramsey says, "We're going to live today like no one else tomorrow. We can live like no one else." It's all mindset Jeff. It's all a mindset.

[0:39:52.3] JG: Love that. Aaron, thanks so much for being a part of this. You're a personal inspiration to me, I hope other people are inspired by this. If you're listening to this and want to connect with Aaron, learn more about what he does with coaching men — you focus on coaching men right Aaron?

[0:40:07.3] AW: I do. Jeff, before we get off, I've got a little gift for your listeners, is it okay?

[0:40:11.3] JG: Sure, yeah.

[0:40:12.1] AW: The documents I was telling you about earlier, I've taken the price off of them, the personal assessment, what do I want and I wrote a piece called Steps to a Productive Day. Three documents and I've put them on a landing page for your listeners, I've taken across, so I'll give them away, I don't want to sell you anything, I'm going to give them to you. Viewfromthetop.com/jeffgoins, all in lower case letters. You go there, get those documents, hopefully it will help you live a life of success and significance. If you want me, reach out to me at View from the Top.

[0:40:41.7] JG: Thanks Aaron, thanks for being a part of this.

[0:40:44.0] AW: Thanks Jeff.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[0:40:46.0] AT: Aaron pose this powerful questions for all of us. Are you clear on what you want from your time here on earth? Do you have people around you that tell you the truth, even when it hurts to hear it? Are you living a life of success and significance? These are big questions and it may take you some time to get to the answers but we hope you'll ask them and seek those answers.

You can get Aaron's resources at no charge by visiting Viewfromthetop.com/jeffgoins. We'd like to thank Aaron for being on the show and thank you for taking the time to listen to the conversation. We invite you to leave a comment about today's episode at Goinswriter.com/104. I'm Andy Traub and on behalf of Jeff Goins, thanks for spending some time with us.

Now, go build your portfolio.

[END]