

Find The Way

By: Andy Andrews; Photo By: Peter Nash



Photo by Peter Nash

Dreams come in many shapes and sizes. They are as different and unique as snowflakes. Ask a hundred different people on the street what their most important dream is and you'll get a hundred different answers. Many may say, "I don't know." In fact, you'll probably hear that answer more than any other. But if you dig deep enough, you'll find that everyone, from the painter to the president, has a dream. Doing so is one of the most fundamental keys to success, yet it is likely the most overlooked.

My dad was the first to tell me, years ago, "You've got to have a dream, Andy!" Well, what he *actually* said was, "You gotta mow the lawn, Andy." But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Let me tell you a story. When I was nine years old, I wanted a tent. I saw this tent in the Sears, Roebuck & Co. catalog, on page 119, in the upper left-hand corner. This tent was beautiful. I had never seen one like it. It was nine by nine, and it had a *floor* in it. I mean, it was incredible. I can't tell you how impressed I was by this amazing tent *with a floor*.

I went to my dad and said, "Dad, can I have this tent? My birthday is coming up; can I get it for my birthday?"

"No," Dad answered, "you can't have it for your birthday."

"Oh, Dad, please," I begged. "*Please* let me have it on my birthday."

"Andy," he said, "your birthday is a couple months away."

"Right..." I answered, not following him.

"Well," said Dad, "why wouldn't you want the tent *now*?"

"Can I *have* it now?" I asked, my eyes wide.

"Sure you can," he replied.

"You're kidding me," I said, incredulous. "You're not teasing me, are you, Daddy?"

"No," he said. "I'm not teasing you. You can have it now."

“Oh-my-gosh-when-can-we-go-get-it?” I gushed, almost in one syllable.

“When you have the money.”

Oh... no!

“Absolutely,” he continued. “You can get *whatever you want*... when you have the money. Andy, when you’re able to pay for it *yourself*, you can pick it up at any time.”

In a mere moment I went from the heights of ecstasy to the depths of depression. I knew there wasn’t any way I was going to get that tent. Yes, I had a dream; I just didn’t have anything to back it up, nothing to put legs on it.

Then my dad did something very important. He sat me down at the dinner table, got out a piece of paper, and said, “Son, you’ve got to have a dream — but you’ve also got to mow the lawn.” Then he drew a chart. “Andy,” he explained, “I know that you, a nine-year-old, cannot afford a tent that costs almost a hundred dollars, but if you mow X number of lawns, if you wash X number of cars, if you mow X number of lawns and wash X number of cars together, if you do this, then you can get what you want.”

I looked at that piece of paper, and I knew at that moment that I had a plan to get my tent. I *knew* I would get it. There was no doubt in my mind: the tent was mine.

Now I had to go through the process, and to be honest with you, I didn’t really know how to go about finding that many lawns to mow or that many cars to wash, so my dad drilled me on how to get the work.

He taught me how to prospect people, and I will never forget. I would knock on a door and say, “Hi, my name is Andy Andrews. My parents are Larry and Joyce Andrews, and we live at 1505 Randall Road, right over there, and I am looking for any work that you might have to help me get a tent that’s in the Sears and Roebuck catalog. It is a nine-by-nine-foot tent that has a floor in it, and my dad has shown me that if I will mow enough lawns, or wash enough cars, or do enough other work, I can get this tent. Is there anything you have that I can do?” And I’d smile — real big.

Believe it or not, there were actually some people who just closed the door — on a nine-year-old kid — without saying a word. A few said, “You know, honey, we have kids of our own, and they do the work. Thank you, though.” Others just answered, “No, thank you.” Still others said, “If you could come back in a month, then I might have something for you.” But a few folks said, “Yeah, come on around back, and I’ll show you where the car is.” And you know what? It wasn’t long until I got that tent.

Here’s the key: I *knew*, no matter what, that I was going to get the tent. Once I *identified* what I wanted and then systematically went after it, there was never any doubt that I was going to win.

So, why is a dream important? Without a defined objective, we simply won’t do the work long enough to finish the race. At nine years old, do you think I liked mowing lawns? No way. Did I enjoy washing cars? No. But I had a *defined objective* in front of me. I didn’t want to get wet. I didn’t want to get grassy. But, baby, I wanted that tent! And I found a way.

What is it that *you* want? From the ice-cream cone to the million-dollar home, the dream is the vessel that gets each of us across the mud puddles, rivers, or oceans in our paths. I got wet and dirty in my quest to purchase the highly covet-



ed tent with inlaid flooring. Will you get dirty or wet on your quest toward what you desire? You bet. But remember: the purpose of the dream is to grow. The process of moving toward your dream requires it. We must grow, expand, go from comfort to challenge. And the process is exciting!

Do I still have my tent? No. (I’m sure my two sons would love it if I did.) But the lessons I learned by following my dad’s instructions are still with me today. I learned to talk to people I had never met in my life. I learned to do what I didn’t want to do in order to get what I wanted. And I learned to keep going in spite of rejection. I got more — than I bargained for.

You may have some lessons to learn, too, on your journey toward fulfilling your dream. Some of those lessons may be hard. You may have to do a few things that you don’t necessarily want to do. You will experience some setbacks, perhaps some rejection, along the way. But if you want it bad enough, because you have defined what “it” is in the first place, you *will* find the way!

Andy Andrews will be hosting this year’s ICM Awards, live from Nashville’s Acuff Theatre on November 9. His audio books can be found at www.AndyAndrews.com and at most major book retail outlets.