

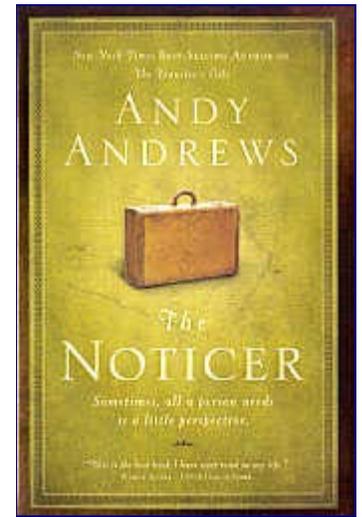
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A READER'S JOURNAL

The Noticer
Sometimes All a Person Needs
Is a Little Perspective
by
Andy Andrews

ARJ2 Chapter: Evolution of Consciousness
Published by Thomas Nelson/TN in 2009
A Book Review by Bobby Matherne ©2009



This book came to my notice by a small poster for the book on the counter top at Dizzy Bean's

Coffeeshop in Gulf Shores, Alabama, a place I frequent when we are in Orange Beach for our summer week. I asked the server if she had read it, and she said it was great. When I got home, I ordered a copy and was surprised to find a 2009 publication date on it. Somehow the word on this book had reached all the way down to the gulf coast beach area, I thought, but then I began to read the book and discovered it was set in Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, even naming some of the places I had seen in the area. Amazingly, the author describes the road I took from our beach cabin to Dizzy Bean's: "Traffic was light on the road. It was used mostly by locals as a shortcut to reach Highway 59. Tourists rarely ventured this way." (Page 45)

But was the book good? Luckily my Google Library showed me that there is a Limited Preview, and I read the first chapter on-line. This book made me feel the way I did when I first read Richard Bach's "Illusions — The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah" so I quickly ordered a copy of the book, read it and then as with Bach's classic, I ordered copies to give away, this time to our grown children. If you haven't heard about this book from a friend yet, consider this your notice. You will want to become a Noticer yourself before you finish reading this book.

The hero of *Illusions* lived as a barnstormer and the hero of this book, Andy, lived as a beachcomber; one lived out of his biplane which he flew from one place to another, giving rides to earn money, and the other lived in a hole in the sand under the Gulf States Park's pier from which he scavenged food and odd jobs. Richard meets Don Shimoda, another barnstormer, and Andy meets Jones, another scavenger. The two authors, Bach and Andrews, seem to be telling a true story, one filled with truths about life and living, and yet otherwise impossible things seem to happen around Shimoda and Jones, both authors learning deep lessons about life in the process from their enigmatic teachers.

This book is a fast read, only two days for me, so it will not make sense for me to give away any of the details of the story in this review, except a comment or two and a sample of one of the stories. This is a book to be consumed by those in happy marriages, those coming out into marriage or out of a bad marriage, and those who have foresworn ever marrying for the first time or ever again. It can be your good driving lessons for marriage, something to assist you out of the ruts which may otherwise keep you stuck on the road to non-marriage. Are these deep and pervasive truths? Not really. As the subtitle rightly says, and the book explains, "Sometimes all you need is a little perspective." Are you ready to take lessons from the Master Noticer, Jones? Get yourself a copy and begin reading.

Andrews dedicates this book to Polly, ". . . my wife, my best friend, my love . . . my noticer." Is your spouse your noticer? Are you a noticer? If your spouse is not your best friend, what is missing, that one thing, which might turn you two in to best friends? Maybe that key ingredient has missed your notice, up until now? A little perspective is all that's needed to set you into balance. Perhaps you won't believe me, but then you haven't read the book, have you?

I am a noticer. As a photographer, I notice things, and take pictures of unique things with the slim pocket camera I always carry with me. Sometimes I take photos from my car while moving, opening a side window or the sun roof to shoot the ephemeral scene which will disappear before I can stop, but I stop whenever I can to photograph the four babies nutria in the middle of the street, or the red-eared slider scurrying across a lawn, or the red-shouldered hawk eating its squirrel lunch, or a large blooming cactus on top of a mound blocking a closed off street. That cactus is now blooming along the street in front of my house, but it would be withering away in a dump if I hadn't noticed it years ago, and salvaged it when the street was re-opened. Most people drove by and never noticed that cactus.

Jones is a noticer, the eponymous noticer, and introduces himself that to Andy who is aggravated by Jones's intrusion into his depressed condition in the sandy hole under the pier which he calls home. Jones explains.

[page 6] "I am a noticer," he said. "It is my gift. While others may be able to sing well or run fast, I notice things that other people overlook. And, you know, most of them are in plain sight." The old man leaned back on his hands and cocked his head. "I notice things about situations and people that produce perspective. That's what most people lack — perspective — a broader view. So I give them that broader view . . . and it allows them to regroup, take a breath, and begin their lives again."

Did Andy have a perspective of his own? Jones asked him that question. Andy had a curious perspective. "I grew up hearing that old adage about God putting a person after His own heart where He wants him to be. And He puts me under a pier?" (Page 7) Ah, there's the rub! People always claim to have perspective, but their perspective has built-in limitations, even putting chains on God, as Andy did when he met Jones.

Did Jones argue with Andy, no, he simply left him with three biographies to read, and the next day invites Andy to a feast of Vienna sausages and sardines. Hah! What a feast! It's one I knew well from going fishing with my dad as a child. If the fish were biting and we got hungry, there was the ubiquitous cans of potted meat and Vienna sausages. With the sausages, no bread was needed and you could eat without stopping fishing. Never missed a fish when you were eating Vienna sausages. But a feast? No way. Andy wasn't thrilled, but Jones insisted on having Andy tell him what he was eating. "Vienna sausages and sardines," was all that Andy could come up with. Some lessons arose during their long meeting and then the two men sat on the sand dune over looking the beach and the waves.

[page 15, 16] For several minutes, we both sat silently, watching the gulls soar overhead, listening to the surf break on the beach. Then Jones began to gather the empty cans and place them in the plastic bag. Standing, he extended his hand and helped me to my feet. "Incidentally," he said with a smile, "you ate sardines and Vienna sausages in the sand. I dined on surf and turf with an ocean view." He slapped me on the back. "It's all about perspective."

Here's how you can tell where you are: if you slough off this story as some cute little phrase, that's a good sign that you need a bigger perspective in life. Chances are you also have a bumper sticker on your car which says something like: "I'd rather be *fishing*," or *skiing* or *hiking* or doing anything *else* but what you are doing. But, if you understand how to enjoy where you are to the fullest, every day can be a feast, no matter where you live, work, or eat.

Again Jones gave Andy three more books to read, all biographies of great leaders, people who had

perspective in their lives and how they achieved it. One perspective Jones shared with Andy is why smart people have more problem with fear than dumb people: they are more creative and imaginative. Ah, that one pinned me. I wish I'd had this book in my lap in 1964-65 when I was beset by fears of my own creative imagination. I was even afraid of having low blood pressure. After months of worrying about my doctor's comment, "You have low blood pressure" one day, I finally got up the courage to ask him what that meant. His reply was worthy of Jones, "It means you may be cursed with long life." But that didn't give me perspective because a few weeks later as I was describing my bowel movements to him in detail, he said, "You know, there's no silver standard for that in Paris." My worries and fears were pervasive and they didn't seem to end, only get bigger. I was misusing my creative imagination, as Jones explains to Walker Miles.

[page 52] "Well, that's why smart people get tripped up with worry and fear. Worry . . . fear . . . is just a misuse of the creative imagination that has been placed in each of us. because we are smart and creative, we imagine all the things that *could* happen, that *might* happen, that *will* happen if this or that happens. See what I mean?"

For me, I began a program of conditioning thoughts to replace the negative fears with positive expectations and possibilities. Norman Vincent Peale, Don Curtis, and Robert H. Schuller were the Jones in my time of need, when I needed a new perspective and a way out of the fears I had built around me like the carapace of a turtle, out of which I had barely dared to peek, up until then.

Everyone's heard the old epigram, "For want of a nail, the horse was lost, etc" where the missing nail is traced to the loss of the battle. Well, that actually happened to Napoleon in his great defeat by Wellington. Napoleon was ready to defeat Wellington and his troops quickly broke through Wellington's lines. But the troops had forgotten the nails they were supposed to drive into the touch hole of the cannons when they passed them to render them useless thereafter. After his troops overran Wellington's lines, the British troops re-took their cannons and turned them on the French troops, slaughtering them. Napoleon yelled from the hilltop for his troops to destroy the cannons, to no avail, all for the lack of a nail. This was Jones's perspective for Henry about the big picture: it depends on the tiny brush strokes.

Henry is a tough case, so Jones asks him a curious question:

[page 111] "Five seagulls are sitting on a dock. One of them decides to fly away. How many seagulls are left?"

"Well . . . four."

"No," Jones responded. "There are still five. Deciding to fly away and *actually* flying away are two very different things."

Henry finally walks away from his long interaction with Jones muttering to himself, "Thank you for a man named Jones." Jones came up on folks unexpectedly, folks who were in need and Jones managed to find that need and fill it. If you have no needs in your life today, perhaps it's because your perspective on your life is limited, up until now. What would Jones have to ask you or tell you if he came up to you blocking your car in your driveway as you were backing up to go meet your husband at a restaurant to ask him for a divorce, as he did to Jan? Or if you were the very old widow, Willow Gray, who was planning to commit suicide because she felt her life was over? Or a man of twenty-three like Andy, who was living in a hole in sand under a pier and hadn't a clue as to what happened or how to get out of his predicament?

There are many stories in this imminently readable book which you will enjoy, but first you must open the book. Then you must open yourself. Look up. Get a new perspective. The best of your life looms ahead of you if you will begin noticing.

