

Dear Ravi Zacharias, Thank You for Letting Us Think

I get mad at Christians a lot, for a whole lot of reasons. But I think it's most often when I see them acting out without using reason at all.

Have you ever heard the phrase, "Christians are so heavenly minded that they're no earthly good?" It hits home way too often. I regularly see people of my faith preaching about what they believe but failing to contribute to the here and now in a thoughtful way. Ever meet religious people who seem to base everything on their feelings, even to the point of being absurd? Me too, and I'm a Christian. These things have become way too normal. It's made me more appreciative than ever for folks who can be sensible about what they believe and offer a sensible accounting for their faith.

And that's why I'm going to miss Ravi Zacharias. So will a whole lot of the church.

Scrolling through Instagram, I see photo after photo of Ravi Zacharias. Many have noted his passing Tuesday. What's unusual about Ravi showing up on my social media so much is *who* is on my Instagram feed. At Vanderbloemen, we serve a whole lot of folks who don't usually attend the same conferences, align with the same denomination or even know one another. It's one of our distinctives—to try to serve *the whole church*. And no matter what corner of the church I looked at (and I see all of them), I saw a tribute to Ravi Zacharias.

We are in an age of more profound polarization than any in recent history. Dr. Zacharias' ability to cross denominations, tribes and lines was uncanny and is worth noting. And it is one that a scant few have replicated. He may not be as well-known as Billy Graham, but his followers were equally diverse

within the Christian faith.

Why did so many different kinds of Christians love Dr. Zacharias? He was a friend to all, which always helps. But he was opinionated, and loud in those opinions. In today's politically correct world that doesn't "win friends and influence people."

What made Ravi so lovable and will end up making him so memorable was his mind. Dr. Zacharias' famous broadcast, *Let My People Think*, was dedicated to engaging the mind into the faith of Christianity. It couldn't have come at a better time.

He began his work in Vietnam, ministering to soldiers in the war. And in an age of high emotions, where many were ruled by how they felt about a matter, Dr. Zacharias noticed a real gap in the area of Christian thinking. Apologetics, the art of logically defending the faith, had fallen to the wayside in those days. Dr. Zacharias began, particularly in the early 1980s, to focus almost exclusively on making his faith make sense.

History shows us that people who take time to think through their faith forge a lasting legacy. I believe the same will be said of Ravi Zacharias.

In the late fourth and early fifth century, Rome's longstanding empire was crumbling, the Huns were poised to sack the capital, and emotions were the currency of the day. Augustine came along and coined the famous phrase "believe so that you may understand." He devoted his writing to making sense of the faith in an age of insensibility, and it became a cornerstone of Western Christianity.

In the 13th century, most of Aristotle's writings had been lost to the Western world. Over the next century, they were recovered and translated into Latin. Thomas Aquinas became one of the chief scholars of Aristotle and a leading thinker in the church. This was during an age of enormous polarity,

during the height of the Crusades and religious friction. His writing changed the church forever. Nearly every pope since his time has quoted him, and John Paul II said, “the Church has been justified in consistently proposing St. Thomas a master of thought and a model of the right way to do theology.”

In a war-torn Europe, C. S. Lewis, a skeptic turned Christian, made regular logical “apologies” for his faith, and his account of his journey, *Surprised by Joy*, continues to be a favorite recommendation by Christians to skeptical friends.

Many others could be listed, but the pattern is clear: the world longs to know that faith can make sense. Anyone can show blind faith. It doesn’t take much to be led by emotion. But to have a faith that seeks understanding is *rare*. To have a faith that can explain *how* to understand is *remarkable*.

Rest well, Dr. Zacharias. Our loss is heaven’s gain, but your work will help a world of restless hearts find rest in a God who truly makes sense. Thanks for letting us think. {eo2}

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