

My Tribute to Zig Ziglar, Whose Book Changed the Direction of My Life

A week ago today, I learned from my friend Peter Lowe that Zig Ziglar died that morning. For 22 years, Peter hosted daylong motivational events in huge arenas around the nation that featured outstanding speakers including former U.S. presidents, heads of state of other countries and titans of industry. But the mainstay at the events was always Zig Ziglar. “One of my primary callings in the events was to provide a platform for him,” Peter told me in the text.

Peter also said: “It’s a sad time. But also a time to celebrate a great man of God who impacted the lives of so many.”

Later that day, I tweeted that I was one of the ones Zig impacted—through his speeches, his audio recordings that I listened to many times and his many books. At the end of this Strang Report, there is a link to an article from *Baptist Press* on the memorial service Saturday (Dec. 1) at Prestonwood Baptist Church, which pastor Jack Graham called a “See You at the Top celebration.”

It was *See You At the Top*, which helped me through a time of discouragement that was so great I almost quit publishing *Charisma*. The early days of *Charisma*—when I was in my late 20s—were a real struggle. Something happened that was so devastating I felt like giving up and quitting. I remembered that I’d seen Zig’s book in a spinner rack at a local restaurant. I needed some encouragement and thought it might help. On a Friday afternoon, I drove to the restaurant, bought the book and spent the rest of the weekend reading it. That was enough to lift me out of my funk and to keep going.

There was one part that helped me handle whatever was going on at the time. Zig said sometimes problems are so bad that we deserve to have a pity party. He said that's OK. He said just wallow in pity and discouragement and despair. But set a time limit—say 48 hours. Enjoy the discouragement. But when the time is up, snap out of it and go on with life.

As simple as that was, it helped me. I set a limit of being discouraged the following Monday. I got up and went to work and things didn't seem nearly as bad. Obviously I didn't quit. Several years ago on a visit to Dallas, I had an opportunity to visit with Zig and tell him personally how that book was pivotal in my life and to thank him.

I'm sure you feel discouraged at times. When you do, you need to stop your "stinkin' thinkin'" (as Zig would say). Or, you need a "check up from the neck up" (another favorite expression, and there were many!)

There were many things I liked about Zig—how he pulled himself out of poverty in Mississippi to become a successful salesman, and how he helped others to get ahead. He also was a devoted husband to his wife, who he called "the redhead," and he always wove some spiritual truth into what he was teaching. He used common-sense logic and humor with a big dose of humility to help people understand and to get his point across.

Others have given more eloquent eulogies about Zig Ziglar. But I wanted to add my story because his book—and that one illustration years ago—literally changed my life.

Do you have a Zig story? Many who read my tweet and post on Facebook added their comments. (follow me on twitter @sstrang or friend me on Facebook. I'm listed as stephenestrang). If you have a Zig Ziglar story or want to express your thoughts, please do so below.

But first, read the report about the "See You at the Top celebration."