

Q: Do you think everyone is in communication?

A: Yes. Whether they know it or not, everyone is a communicator through their words, actions, facial expressions, etc.

Q: What do you think makes effective communicators?

A: Effective communicators take a genuine interest in what they are doing and whom they are doing it with. For example, if you continually shuffle through papers while someone is in your office, you are communicating that what you are doing is more important than what the person is saying. A closed office door can communicate, "You may want to talk to me, but I don't need to talk to you." Communication in relationships is extraordinarily important.

Q: How do you prepare for a speaking engagement?

A: I try to find out what my audience likes. When I do a corporate engagement, I talk to the leadership and ask what they expect from me. What are their needs? Then I tailor my talk to what comes from the conversation. A lot of prayer goes into my preparation as well. Even when I repeat speeches that remain 90% the same, I spend a minimum of five hours preparing. I think it is arrogant to assume that

just because I have done something many times, I can stand up and deliver it effectively again. You get into trouble when you assume things and are overconfident. If you're not focused, disruptions will come your way and throw you off track.

Q: Do you anticipate what your audience may expect?

A: Yes. I create my own set of imaginary questions an audience might ask if given the opportunity, and then I try to provide the answers. "What is the road map to life?" is a favorite question I try to answer. I happen to believe everyone wants to be happy, healthy, and reasonably prosperous and secure. I believe people want to have good family relations with the hope that the future will be even better. People are also interested in money. Money is not the most important thing in life, but it is reasonably close to oxygen! Interestingly, 73% of Americans say they are not satisfied with their lives because money does not bring sat-

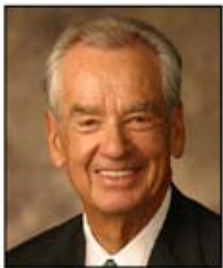
"Hope is the foundational quality of all change. Encouragement is the fuel in which hope runs. I try to dwell a great deal on encouragement when I speak. Everyone will probably leave here in a good mood. Three minutes later you will be in a traffic jam. That's life! We can't control that, but we can control our attitude." —Zig Ziglar

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isfaction, commitment, etc. They neglect one of the most important things: the “home court advantage.” For example, I do all my preparation at home—writing, reading, etc. During the process of a day, my wife and I will cross paths at least 20 or 30 times. Before we left the house today, I suspect we have already hugged 15 times. What did we communicate to each other? I love you. You are very special. You are important to me.

Q: If you feel yourself losing your audience during a speech, how do you mentally shift gears?

A: I try to say something humorous before continuing. If you feel the speech you gave fizzled, don't let the discouragement of the moment get you down. It is very temporary. Failure is an event; it is *not* a person. Yesterday really did end last night. Today is a brand new day. You *can* start over.

Q: You have written one of the greatest books I have ever read on the subject of grieving (*Confessions of a Grieving Christian*). You and Jean have known sorrow and grief through the death of your daughter, Susan. How can people best communicate their condolences when friends and work associates are dealing with a loss or grief in life?

A: Let them know you really care. Like most people, you probably don't like to go into situations when you don't know what to say. However, if you will express that while you do not know exactly how they feel—and no one knows how anyone really feels—you have come as their friend, praying for and thinking about them. Your very presence will be an encouragement.

A high percentage of people divorce when they lose a child. However, when we lost our daughter, my wife and I not only grew through the situation, but we were able to enhance our marriage. We wept together. The Bible says that God collects our tears in a bottle (Psalm 56:8). There are no known medical benefits for not weeping. None. Don't expect closure to occur after the funeral service or burial. You don't bring the death of a loved one to closure with an event. It's a process. And you never completely get over it. But God in His grace and mercy always shows up to give us the comfort and confidence we need. While we still have those times of weeping about our daughter, we realize she is infinitely better off with Christ than she ever was with us. We loved

her unconditionally and did everything we could for her, including a lot of prayer. But Psalms 139:16 tells us that our death date is determined before we are born. We can increase our quality of life, but not our life span. Susan was God's child and she loved Him with all her heart. Her finest trip was her trip into heaven to be with her Lord and Savior.

Q: What is the one thing you want people to remember after they hear you speak?

A: I always repeat the same thing whenever I speak, whether it is for public seminars, corporate seminars, or wherever I go.

I met Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior on July 4, 1972. An elderly black lady spent the weekend in our home. For three days, she told me about Christ's love for me and that He had been waiting on me all these years. Before Jesus came into my life, my family would rejoice when I had an invitation to speak because that meant a pay date was in front of me. From the moment I was saved, “pay dates” were less important because my focus was different. After that time, I never made a speech to anybody, anywhere, anytime about anything when I did not make it clear what my Source was. I think God let me struggle so long in my career because I have always been honest, hard working and dependable. I've always put a good foot forward. I had everything except His *power*. When I started reading and studying my Bible, I came across this verse: “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13). I call that “Advanced Math”— You + God = Enough!

The moment I was saved, God put people in my path to direct me, guide me, and encourage me. I also prayed that God would keep me from giving into temptation so that I may give all my energies to fulfilling His will. If there were no eternity, I still would not go back to the life I had before I professed faith in Christ. It is so wonderful to know that regardless of what happens to me now, I am already resting in heaven. I don't have to worry about tomorrow because I know Who is in charge of tomorrow and I know Who is in charge of me. He puts it in writing: “...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9). I don't worry because I have already won!