

Finding In Loss

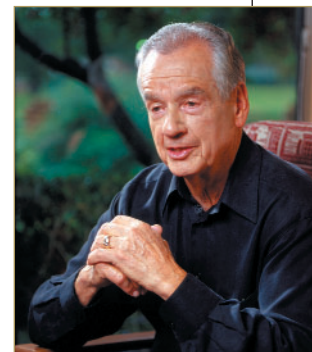
by Stephanie Dube

"May 12, 1995, Near Midnight – The doctor called the family together at six o'clock this evening. It has been exactly one week since we had the first meeting of this type. He clearly explained to us that we are near the end of Suzan's life. ... It is midnight now but we are all together waiting. My spirit is drawn to Jean Ziglar tonight. She has been at this hospital around the clock for the past week, by her dying daughter's side at every possible moment, loving her and comforting her. Jean's pain is so intense you can almost touch it, although she walks in it with grace and poise ... I sense she would trade places with Suzan in an instant if that were possible.

"O God, why have You given us this cup to drink? I am angry at moments and wish I could somehow crush all pain, sickness, death, and evil in the world! It is then that I remember, God did just that through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ."

AN EXCERPT FROM JIM NORMAN'S JOURNAL,
SON-IN-LAW OF ZIG ZIGLAR,
FROM "CONFESSIONS OF A GRIEVING CHRISTIAN"

"I walked for about an hour, weeping and praying the entire time."



The family gathered together that night, waiting for the doctor's news. His face was grim, tired. Their hearts sank.

Suzan Ziglar Witmeyer was not going to survive.

The beautiful woman who had been such a blessing in their lives was being snatched away. Against all hope, they had prayed she would get well enough to receive a lung transplant. They had prayed she would be healed.

And now, she had little time left.

The family waited. Prayed. Cried.

Since she had become a Christian, Suzan had been a tower of faith. She edited her father's nationally syndicated newspaper column. Her husband, Chad, was the senior vice president of operations for the Zig Ziglar Corporation. She and Chad had two daughters, Katherine and Elizabeth.

Her death would leave a deep void.

It was too soon.

"May 13, 1995, 9:45 am – After the nurses removed the tubes and medical equipment from Suzan's body, we gathered again around her bed, joining hands and praying one more time. We thanked God for His promises in Christ and released this precious wife, mother, daughter, and sister into His loving care ... And then we kissed her good-bye."

AN EXCERPT FROM JIM NORMAN'S JOURNAL, SON-IN-LAW OF ZIG ZIGLAR

On May 13, 1995, Zig Ziglar's firstborn daughter, Suzan Ziglar Witmeyer, died. She was only 46.

The night after Suzan's death, Zig couldn't sleep. He kept thinking about his daughter, unable to make sense of what had just happened. He tried to read the Bible, but he couldn't. He tried to pray, but couldn't. His mind and spirit were numb. The next morning, exhausted with sorrow and reeling from pain, he went for a walk in his neighborhood. He didn't know what else to do.

"When I got back in sight of the house, God impressed in my mind as if He were audibly speaking to me, 'Suzan is fine. She's with Me and you're going to be fine too.'"

"I still remember the morning after Suzan died," Zig recalled. "I walked for about an hour, weeping and praying the entire time. When I got back in sight of the house, God impressed in my mind as if He were audibly speaking to me, 'Suzan is fine. She's with Me and you're going to be fine too. I'm all you need. I want you to keep walking and praying and weeping.' The comfort I felt was unbelievable. The tears continued to flow, but they were tears not for her but

myself and my living family. We loved her and missed her, but we knew she was better off than she ever was with us."

Zig Ziglar

"On the second day after Suzan's death, I again went on a walk to talk with God. Again, I walked and cried and prayed. ... Then my thoughts turned to Psalm 23. I thought of the still waters mentioned in this psalm, and suddenly I reversed my direction and walked over to the lake, which is about a quarter of a mile away from our home. ... I prayed that God would

give me a peace in my heart that was just like the still peace He had created for the lake that morning. ... Farther around the lake, I saw two beautiful doves take off in full flight. At that point I thought, 'That's what God permits us to do when we trust Him. He helps us to rise above the challenges of life and to fly to Him for the comfort, strength, wisdom...' I couldn't help rejoicing ... A walk that began in sadness ended in joy."

- ZIG ZIGLAR, "CONFESSIONS OF A GRIEVING CHRISTIAN"

Throughout the days after Suzan's death, Zig continued walking and praying. On one walk, he wept and prayed for Suzan's children and husband. Her daughters were only 11 and 14 when Suzan died. As Zig wrote in his book, he sometimes wondered about the timing of her death. She would never see Katherine marry or have children. She would miss Elizabeth's victories and milestones. Her husband Chad would have to raise their two daughters alone.

The realization of what they were missing brought him to tears. He didn't understand why she was gone. But he knew that God understood.

"If we don't understand God's head, we can always trust His heart," Zig said. "Romans 8:28 says that all things work together for good for those who love God. He's not going to do or permit anything that is not in the long-range best interest of His child. Every individual thing is not good, but God can take whatever it is and work it in with all of life and make it good."

"The interesting thing about grief is that you can experience joy simultaneously. You cannot experience happiness and grief at the same time. But joy is much deeper and more meaningful - it's from God. My No. 1 comfort after Suzan's death was my reliance on God's love," Zig said. "I believe one reason God sent Christ to this earth was to show us that God fully understands all that we feel and experience."



"When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw Him, she fell at His feet and said, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.' When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 'Where have you laid him?' He asked. 'Come and see, Lord,' they replied. Jesus wept." John 11:32-35

Just a few months before Suzan died, she began helping Zig with his newspaper column. Her sensitivity, intelligence and compassion were a vital aid to his writing. Her death brought a heartbreaking void, in part, because of the potential that would never see fruition.

"The righteous pass away; the godly often die before their time. And no one seems to care or wonder why. No one seems to understand that God is protecting them from the evil to come. For the godly who die will rest in peace." Isaiah 57:1-2 (NLT)

"We don't know what lay in front of our daughter, but God did," Zig said. "He took her home, called her home to protect her from the hurt and the danger."

When a loved one dies, those left behind may beat themselves up with "what if" questions. "What if I had gone to the store instead of her?" "What if I had not let him drive?" As Zig discovered, Psalm 139:16 can bring comfort to the endless "what ifs."



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God's Touch

"At our company Christmas party on Friday night, December 18, 1998, I heard two songs that brought beautiful, moving memories of Suzan back to me... and the tears flowed. Again I wondered - but didn't ask - just how long the grief would last."

FROM "CONFESSIONS OF A GRIEVING CHRISTIAN" BY ZIG ZIGLAR, PG. 259

"Every grieving person needs to understand, you never get over it," Zig Ziglar said. "For the Christian, grief is like going through a long, winding mountain tunnel. You continue to go forward, not in your strength and will, but in the promises of Christ, who through His shed blood has given us victory by taking the sting out of death. He who is Truth promises that one day we will see Him face to face. In that glorious moment, our grief will be over and our rejoicing will be eternal."

Dr. Lorele Vanzant, licensed marriage and family therapist, said the holidays can bring especially painful moments. There are several things people can remember to help in times of grief:

- 1.) Don't avoid the pain
- 2.) Understand your anger
- 3.) Don't suppress your tears
- 4.) Allow someone to comfort you
- 5.) No matter how terrible the grief, God is strong enough to hold you through it.

"All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be." Psalm 139:16

"That verse removed guilt," Zig explained. "You have to remember that it was preordained before the person was born - that was their day to go. In our daughter's case, we provided the best medical care, lots of people were praying for her, but God had her days numbered."

"When you think about it, these two verses remove guilt and anger. How can you get mad at a loving God who always acts in the best interest of His child?"



"When I see Suzan in heaven with my eyes of faith, I never see her moving slowly, as she did her last few months on earth. I see her moving smoothly and quickly and easily, just as she did in her younger years. I know with certainty that she has been restored to even better health than she experienced on earth."

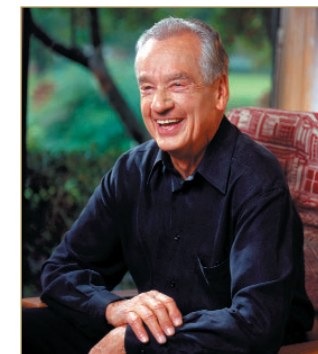
ZIG ZIGLAR, "CONFESSIONS OF A GRIEVING CHRISTIAN"

"If God offered me our daughter back, I would not accept her," Zig said. "It would be the most selfish thing I could do, because she's so much better off with Him than she ever was with us."

"As much as we loved Suzie, He loved her more."

"There is no doubt in our minds that we will see our daughter again," Zig said. "While we weep for her now, we rejoice in where she is. And we rejoice that we'll be able to see her again. That's the hope we have in Christ."

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies.'" John 11:21-25



"May 18, 1995 - It will take some time for the experience of Suzan's sudden departure to sink in for us. And it may take even more time for us to see how God will turn this tragedy into something positive ... The mysteries of God and life are infinite. We each wish we could clearly discern the why of events such as these, but we are not given that privilege. We do know with certainty that we have hope as believers in Christ, a hope that those who do not know Christ do not have. The Scriptures say that the angels

rejoice in heaven when a person receives Christ's forgiveness. I know there is a new citizen in heaven who would urge you to do this and to make Jesus Christ your personal Savior if you have not already done so. Suzie will no doubt sing a hymn for you from heaven - one filled with love and joy if you make a decision to share the faith that carried her into eternity to rest safely in the arms of God."

AN EXCERPT FROM JIM NORMAN'S JOURNAL, SON-IN-LAW OF ZIG ZIGLAR, FROM "CONFESSIONS OF A GRIEVING CHRISTIAN"