



CHAPTER 1

Prepare for Your Moment of Decision

THE POWER OF IDENTITY

“We generally change ourselves for one of two reasons: inspiration or desperation.” —Jim Rohn

Unfortunately, I spent too much of my life not really knowing who I was or what I wanted out of life. Something desperately needed to change. I came to realize that I had been trying to fit my life into a pre-made mold, crafted partly out of society’s demands, partly out of a desire to please others, and partly out of my own misguided thinking. I had convinced myself that this is what it looked like to be a success. There was only one problem. I was not fulfilled or full of vision.

A powerful season of soul searching led me to hire my own personal Life Coach, my co-author, Kim Fletcher.

I began to open my eyes to the possibility that there may be more waiting for me than I had once dreamed. I had not been without external successes. At an early

age, I became a licensed pilot. I also began collecting a series of professional awards and accolades in the business world, particularly in the areas of sales and training. But none of this “success” ended up having much meaning. My search drove me to take an honest appraisal of my life, my work, my goals, and where my current actions would take me down the road, if nothing were to change. I did not like what I saw coming.

My first thought was, I need to change some things about my life, but my Life Coach was quick to put on the brakes of this process—I was trying to accelerate prematurely.

She began walking me through a process of revisiting who I believe myself to be. Hours were spent discussing identity—the man I saw in the mirror, and the man I could envision becoming as my days flowed into years.

Much of this process felt painfully slow. At times, I thought she might be missing the point. After all, she was coaching a man who was already successful in many regards; he just needed to figure out how to feel a bit better about it all at the end of the day.

Today, I am a different man.

Along the way, two powerful things took place that changed everything for me. First of all, I realized that the most important achievement I would ever accomplish was to get to know the real Harold and begin to honor

my own story, living out who God had created me to be. Out of this crucial place of a right identity, my coach assured me, would begin to flow rivers of vision and fulfillment—the things I had been seeking but could not seem to lay hold of.

The second thing that happened was this revelation: while I was hoping to change (improve) my life, my life had actually begun secretly changing me ... and it did so without my permission!

I took back the authority. I realized that instead of my life changing me, I could be changing and influencing my own life.

Let me offer a stern warning from a place of deep compassion. Life will change you, and too often it will change you in ways you did not want or anticipate—especially if you base your life on externals such as status, achievement, degrees, and awards. Externals may also include past failures or places where you missed the mark. The accumulation of this “external thinking” can cause you to react impulsively, making decisions and choosing directions that derail your intended destiny.

I would love to tell you that my roadblock was the massive amount of success that had gone to my head. But the applause of my successes to date was being drowned out by another series of voices. It actually turned out to be my past hurts, lingering fears, a deep sense that I

would disappoint those closest to me; a plaguing doubt over whether or not I was, or could ever be, “good enough” filled my days insidiously, quietly, almost like a whisper.

Doubts about myself—and some well-worn, limiting beliefs—were placed on me by some real, and some perceived, circumstances. Events long since past were telling me who I was ... and many of them were lying!

My self-doubt led me to set business goals and life visions that were what I thought they should be, not what I really wanted them to be.

My Life Coach reminded me that we are each the sum of those with whom we associate, so she began encouraging me to revisit some of my mentors, heroes, and friends who have inspired and equipped me.

At the top of my list, you will always find Zig Ziglar. When you hear that name, you instantly picture a man who is “successful” by any standard. But in his bestselling book, *See You at the Top*, Zig paints a powerful picture of his humble beginning:

“After two-and-one-half years of less than overwhelming sales success (to be honest I wasn’t even a overwhelming success), the picture changed dramatically and my career did a 180-degree turn. Here’s the story. I attended an all-day training session in Charlotte, North

Carolina, conducted by P. C. Merrell of Nashville, Tennessee. It was a good session, but I have long since forgotten the specific techniques I learned. Later that evening I drove back home to Lancaster, South Carolina, to conduct a dinner demonstration. I was late getting home and even later getting to bed; then the baby kept us up most of the night. At 5:30 a.m. the alarm clock sounded off and force of habit rolled me out of bed. We lived in a small, upstairs apartment over a grocery store. More asleep than awake, I looked out the window and saw snow falling. There were already several inches of snow on the ground and I was driving a heaterless Crosley automobile. I did what any intelligent human being would do that morning. That's right, I crawled back into bed.

As I lay there it dawned on me that I had never missed or ever been late for a meeting of any kind. Besides, when they hired me—after my two month campaign to get the job—I had promised to attend all sales meetings and training sessions. Mother's words also came back to me. 'If your word is no good, eventually you will be no good,' and 'When you work for someone—work for them all the way. If you are in something, get all the way in and if you can't get all the way in—get all the way out.' I stumbled back out of bed and made that cold drive to Charlotte and a whole new way of life.

When the training session was over, Mr. Merrell quietly took me aside and said, ‘You know, Zig, I’ve been watching you for two and a half years, and I have never seen such a waste.’ (Now, friends, that will get your attention.) Somewhat startled, I asked what he meant. He explained, ‘You have a lot of ability. You could be a great one and maybe even become a national champion.’ Naturally, I was flattered, but a little skeptical, so I asked if he really meant it. He assured me, ‘Zig, there is no doubt in my mind if you really went to work on an organized schedule, and started believing in yourself, you could go all the way to the top.’

To tell the truth, when those words really soaked in I was stunned. You have to understand my background to appreciate what those words meant to me. As a boy I was rather small, weighing less than 120 pounds fully dressed when I entered my senior class in high school. Most of the time since the fifth grade I had worked after school and on Saturdays, and hadn’t been active in sports. My self-image was that of a little guy from a little town, who someday was going to go back to that little town and earn \$5,117 in a single year. Now, all of a sudden, here’s a man whom I admired and respected telling me, ‘You could be a great one.’ Fortunately, I believed Mr. Merrell and started thinking like a champion, acting like a champion, seeing myself as a champion—and performing like a champion.”