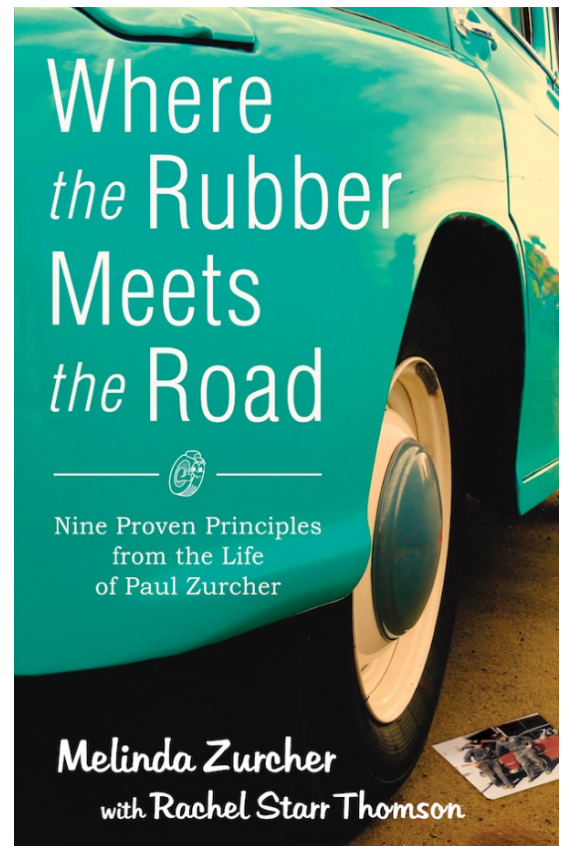


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Where the Rubber Meets the Road

Nine Proven Principles from the Life of Paul Zurcher

Melinda Zurcher with Rachel Starr Thomson



In an abandoned barn in the middle of Italy, enemy fire tore through Paul Zurcher's shoulder. A distance of only a few inches was the difference between death and his continued life. He came home knowing life was a gift, and he made something truly remarkable of his.

When Paul returned from the war, he took out a \$300 loan and opened a one-bay service station in his small Indiana hometown. From these humble beginnings, he grew his business to encompass over 280 locations under the Best-One Tire banner, becoming the largest independent tire distributor of Bridgestone Firestone.

But Paul's business success makes up just a small fraction of his life's impact. He deeply influenced his family, friends, and countless others by faithfully following and sharing his nine life principles. Paul's life principles became the commitments he honored throughout his life, and they made him truly successful at business—and at life.

Paul's life principles provide the structure for this book. Each chapter opens with one of his principles as he himself described them. These are followed by stories from his life that illustrate how he lived what he believed. And this is what made Paul's life so distinct: the way his words and actions aligned. This speaks to his sincerity and commitment—and at the same time, it points to the potential we all possess.

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Deep River
B O O K S

About the Authors

Melinda Zurcher



Melinda Zurcher enjoys the smell of rubber and tires—which turned out to be a deal-clincher when she married Jon and joined the Best-One Tire family ten years ago. Since then, she and her family have often played hide-and-seek in the stacks of tires and rollerbladed around their Best-One Tire warehouse.

Melinda has always enjoyed writing, and she's published articles in Christian and educational journals, but she began her career as a teacher with her BS and MEd in elementary education. After teaching third and fourth grade for two years, she chose to stay home with her daughters, Hailey, Bria, and McKenna. She is currently completing her PhD

in education from Ball State University. Melinda and her family live in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Rachel Starr Thomson

Rachel Starr Thomson works with words from both sides of the desk—as both an editor and a writer, she loves to explore the intersections of faith and the written word. She wrote her first book when she was thirteen and has since published over thirty novels, nonfiction works, and short stories, including *The Oneness Cycle* and *The Seventh World Trilogy*. In 2003, she started freelance editing, a career she's continued ever since.

Rachel dwells in southern Canada but regularly travels all over North America, writing, speaking, and singing with the arts ministry she cofounded, 1:11 Ministries.

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What Others Are Saying About

Where the Rubber Meets the Road

Paul Zurcher, as the author says, “lived a life of integrity and intentionality,” and that life is captured powerfully in this book. . . . **It would be a great Sunday School class study, a mentoring guide for a men’s group, or just a personal growth book for any individual.** Full of heart-warming stories and a valuable set of principles that shaped Paul’s life, the book provides lessons, inspiration, and practical wisdom that will bless any reader.

— **Michael J. Coyner, United Methodist Bishop (retired)**

In *Where the Rubber Meets the Road*, we are reminded that humility, a warm smile, and a ready word of encouragement are always appropriate. **Paul Zurcher’s legacy calls us to remember that the future belongs to those who keep on learning, and that taking time for family and running a major business are not mutually exclusive priorities.** He had figured out long before the textbook writers that honoring people and building healthy relationships, when coupled with the energy that comes from a vision undergirded by unquestioned personal integrity, are keys to building a vibrant and sustainable business. This story is truly remarkable. I highly recommend it.

— **Dr. Gene Habecker, President, Taylor University (2005–2016)**

Our world needs more leaders like Paul Zurcher. There are very few like him. Read his story, learn from his principles, and you will be blessed, encouraged, and strengthened. I encourage you to learn from Paul’s life and his nine principles. I hope you will find and define your own life’s purpose and develop your own principles for living so that you can impact thousands of lives as well.

— **Ray Hilbert, Co-Founder, Truth at Work, International Best-Selling Author**

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Suggested Interview Questions

For Melinda Zurcher, author of

Where the Rubber Meets the Road

Nine Proven Principles from the Life of Paul Zurcher

Q: Who is Paul Zurcher, and why would people want to know about his life?

A: Paul Zurcher described himself as an “Indiana farm boy.” Those might have been his roots, which he never forgot, but he went on to live a life of *great* influence. He became the largest independent tire dealer for Bridgestone Firestone and a partner in over 280 tire store locations.

However, there are many people who are successful in business. Paul’s life was different because he lived it with such intentionality. He truly believed he was in the “people business” rather than in the “tire business.” Until the day he died, Paul worked to help others be successful and accomplish their dreams.

Q: Is this book of interest to people who aren’t in business—let alone the tire industry in particular?

A: Though this book does offer insight into how Paul was successful in the tire industry, the focus of the book is really on Paul’s nine life principles that he developed and stories that illustrate how he lived them out. The book includes anecdotes from Paul’s early life, experiences in business, his family, and interviews with his partners. Paul lived a very inspiring life that made those around him want to live life to the fullest.

Q: What were Paul’s nine life principles?

A: First, to seek God’s friendship, fellowship, and guidance.

Second, to develop effective relationships.

Third, to treat everyone with honor, love, dignity, and respect.

Fourth, to be self-disciplined and self-controlled.

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Fifth, to do the right things right.

Sixth, to be a positive, enthusiastic, and passionate person.

Seventh, to never compromise my integrity.

Eighth, to plan for tomorrow today.

Ninth, to live life now, and live it wide open.

Q: Which life principle means the most to you and why?

A: When I think of Paul, I think of Principle #3: to treat everyone with honor, love, dignity, and respect. Paul showed genuine love to everyone he encountered, from the waitress at the restaurant to the driver on the tour bus. I saw him do it many times—but he would take the person’s hand, look them straight in the eye, and quietly tell them something encouraging. As a part of Paul’s family, that was the most special—when you felt like he really *stopped* and *saw* you and *cared* about you.

There are so many examples of Paul living out this principle, but one story from the book is about good friends of Paul and Betty who moved to New York. They had kept in touch and visited each other for a number of years. One night, this friend, June, called and said her marriage was on the rocks and she thought she and her husband were going to get a divorce. Paul just said, “June, you hold on. We’ll be right there.” Paul and Betty booked a flight that night and were in New York the following day. The two couples stayed up the entire night talking and praying. Paul had written down some thoughts and verses that he shared with them. Then they all went out to breakfast the next morning before June dropped them off at the airport. June wrote in an email, “That was ‘intervention’ at its best! I never forget their act of love and what that meant to both me and my husband.”

No matter who you were, Paul showed such a deep love for others. He didn’t just do it for show or for a business advantage, but he really knew how to love others well.

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Q: What was the key to Paul’s success in business and life and general?

A: I think Paul’s son, Mark, said it best when talking about how Paul lived out his life principles. Mark leaned forward and said, “The big thing there is he *knew* them.” Most people, after all, don’t—few can articulate their principles, much less live them out. “And the second thing is he was committed to them. Many people don’t know their own principles to begin with, and those who do aren’t committed to them. Those two things alone would put him in a one-in-a-million class. And along with that, he had the capabilities to actually put them to work.” Paul lived his life with such consistency and integrity that people flocked to him—business partners, suppliers, friends, and community members. I think Paul’s deep convictions and his relationships with others were the keys to his success.

Q: What one story best illustrate the life and character of Paul?

A: I do love that we wrote this book through the lens of stories from Paul’s life. It is easy to skim a list of principles, but the stories are what really stay with you.

My favorite story about Paul is probably the way he ended his life. He obviously lived his life in a very BIG way, but he also ended it with such a strong message to those still on this earth.

At the age of ninety, Paul was still living life “wide open,” as he liked to say. He was still working six days a week, driving to business meetings around the Midwest, visiting his wife with Alzheimer’s, and speaking at church and community events. He suddenly became ill on Good Friday of 2015—the day he had planned to speak in a Good Friday service. Paul really felt God had led him to prepare a message for that service that was different from any he had given before. It was about obedience.

When in the hospital, Paul wondered aloud why God had not allowed him to share the sermon he prepared. However, the reason for this became perfectly clear on the day of Paul’s funeral. To a packed sanctuary, Paul’s pastor preached the exact sermon Paul had planned to give. The topic was obedience and challenged all to live out something Charles Stanley had written, “Obey God and leave the consequences to him.” Those were the exact words that Paul said in the hospital

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when he learned he had cancer. They were also the words that encouraged his friends and family at his funeral: continue to obey God and leave the rest up to him. Those weren't just words to anyone who knew Paul because he actually lived them.

Q: What do you hope people will take away from reading this book?

A: I knew when we started writing this book Paul would not want a straightforward biography or memoir. He didn't care if people knew his life story with details about his family and business. Paul was very passionate, however, about inspiring others to reach for their dreams and live a life of service. Without being pushy, he would take any opportunity to share his nine life principles and give practical illustrations for how to apply them to life.

When people finish reading this book, I hope they are energized to get back to their own lives. Whether in the tire business or any other occupation or role, Paul would want them to see that the power of choice is in their hands and to intentionally choose their next steps as they serve the Lord and live a life of obedience.

Q: What is distinct about the Best-One Tire business model?

A: Best-One is unusual because Paul wanted his partners and managers to be shareholders in the corporations. He believed they would take more ownership and pride in the business if they had a stake in its success and their own name on the sign. Eventually, most of the stores came under the name of Best-One, but they started with the names of their managers, as in McMahan Tire or Wertemberger Tire.

Paul once wrote he wanted to combine the advantages of a small and large business. Like small businesses, Paul allowed many of the decisions for running the store to be driven by those working day-to-day in the store. Best-One also offered the advantages of a large business by providing centralized resources and deeper prices with suppliers. Rather than the pyramid organization you see at so many companies, Best-One was more like a tree with Paul and other family members and staff acting as the roots and trunk supporting the branches, leaves, and fruit

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who were the partners, managers, and employees. Paul wanted his partners to have everything they needed to be successful and serve their customers well.

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