

COMMUNICATION SPEECH
FOR
TAMMIE ANDERSON
REVISED

Hello everyone!!! I want to thank Mary Kate Pursley for giving me the opportunity to share some thoughts with you this evening. I am also thankful for each of you making up an audience that wants to hear what I have to say. Oftentimes, when I read inspiring information and want to share it with my children, their response is usually, “oh mom, please stop.” So I am thrilled to be here with you tonight. It’s always a pleasure and a personal challenge to speak to an interesting, wonderful, receptive and diverse group of women like you and today is no exception. It’s so inspiring to me to be in the company of **ALL OF YOU**-whether you’re young and eager and ready to learn or wiser and more seasoned in the ways of the world and of expressing your faith, there is always something each one of us can learn from each other.

When I begin to prepare a topic, I always pray about it and I ask God for help and clarity. The other dialogue with God goes something like this, “God, I am willing to speak and share, but you know I am not an expert on any subject and I fail more times than I succeed. Are you sure about this?” God reminds me that I just need to be willing and that He will help me. Please know that what I share with you tonight are things that I have learned along the way that make my life

more meaningful and it is my hope that passing it along, you might hear something that will be helpful to you.

This evening, I want to share some thoughts about communication, understanding and enlightenment, and how we choose to live our lives with faith, perseverance and commitment in that period of time known to some as “the Dash.”

I don't know if many of you have heard of a woman named Linda Ellis, but she wrote a poem called “The Dash.” It's short and sweet-just thirty-six lines, and as the author said, she never dreamed how those six stanzas would change her life. You know what? They changed my life too! Those words made me look at everything differently. They provoked a thought process that I want to bring to you. Very simply, the poem tells of a man, who, at a friend's funeral, refers to the person's birth date and his death date. Those two dates are the true and major milestones of life, separated by a simple dash. But when we think about it, that little dash is where **ALL** of life is lived, and it's up to us to make our own personal “dash” count. As I attempted to grasp this simple but profound idea, I also realized that everything we say and do can have so many different meanings and impact and it's up to each one of us to find the way to communicate so that our intentions are clearly understood. Up until the point that I had read “The Dash,” that literal line drawn between dates held no significance to me. It was just a small hyphen-an almost invisible connector only needed for grammatical purposes. When I mentioned this poem to a friend, I asked her if she knew what the Dash was. She lives in Los Angeles and without skipping a beat she said,

“Of course! It’s the local bus in my neighborhood!!” I guess one person’s lifetime can be another’s bus ride! (**Wait for the laugh**). The more I thought about this, the more I saw how we take simple communication for granted, and I saw how lack of clarity can have a profound effect on the way each one of us chooses to spend our time “in the dash,”. ...And I mean life and not the bus!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

To give another small example, and I am sure **every one of you** can relate to this, I’ll tell you a little story about communication and simple enlightenment. One day during the summer, before I went to work, I left a list of chores for my son to tackle. On this list was the task to “unload the dishwasher.” When I came back home a couple of hours later, I walked into the kitchen and found all of the dishes piled on the counter top. I called my son into the kitchen and pointed out that all of the dishes need to be put back into the cabinets. Buddy just looked at me and said, “You said to unload the dishwasher.” You know what? He was right. So many times we get lost in assumptions. Buddy did what I asked him to do. I cannot expect him to read my mind. Since that incident, and since reading the Dash, I have become enlightened. I now do my best to think about what I want the other person to know or do and I make every attempt to express myself in such a way that the intent is clear to everyone. Life is too short and time is too precious to be caught up in untangling seemingly simple misunderstanding, and if you **DO** find yourself locked in a mess of mixed messages, **LEARN** from the situation. Take a look at what happened, where the misunderstanding took place, and vow to have more clarity the next time.

In Psalms 119:130, we learn, “The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.” In Daniel 2:22, we are awakened with, “It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, And the light dwells within him.”

The unfolding of our words give light too, and it is up to each one of us to be responsible for how we communicate and how we live our “Dash.” As we gain patience and strength from our faith, we can begin to really practice being in the moment and appreciating what we have, who we are, and the gifts we are blessed with. As we live and learn, we can use those experiences to become more and more aware of who we are, and the miracles that surround us have the space to be revealed. When we are young, life seems to move at an incredibly quick pace. There is always something new to explore and experience, and we can tend to be in “sensory overload.” As we get older and learn from our experience, our appreciation of those moments deepens and as our knowledge base grows, we have a duty and a responsibility to sharpen our ability to learn, understand, and communicate those lessons in order to teach those around us. And sometimes, like with Buddy, we learn from our children and the younger people we are blessed to have on our lives.

Actions give light and life also. I want to share a story about a man named Mr. Ransom that I met when I was about 8 years old and I believe that his actions changed my life. One day, I was with my dad at a farm of one of his friends. I noticed some horses and walked over to the fence and peered out into the field watching Mr. Ransom ride. He was a grandfatherly type and he saw me watching and later told my dad that he would work with me and teach me to ride. I loved horses and this was a dream come true. That was the beginning of a life long relationship. He worked with me every day after school and taught me the proper way to ride horses. Then, as I learned and became more and more comfortable in the saddle, he wanted me to ride in horse shows. He knew that my family couldn't afford the expenses of showing so one Saturday, he and his wife took me to a tack store and bought a complete riding habit for me to wear in upcoming shows. For the next several years, Mr. and Mrs. Ransom took me to different horse shows all over South Carolina. It was great fun and it truly helped to build confidence and gave me something to be passionate about. I doubt he ever realized how that simple act of communication and kindness changed the course of my life. I was a child of a dysfunctional home, possibly destined for a life of drug and alcohol abuse or to marry an alcoholic like my father, but Mr. Ransom's actions inspired me to feel like I mattered. He became like a part of our family-a **HEALTHY** part, and he taught me a lot-**especially** the power of kindness. Although he's been gone for over thirty years, I will never forget his contribution to my life. I still love to ride and so does my daughter Savannah. Riding is something that we do together and we enjoy passing it on to others by

The area underlined is an area that needs revising so I am not talking negative about my family.

hosting riding events and giving lessons. I watch these children enjoy the horses and I always say, "thank you, God." These children are benefiting from riding because over 40 years ago, someone cared enough to share his passion with a little girl. Mr. Ransom might have thought his simple outreach was nothing more than a favor, but more than a generation later, his kindness and spirit keep giving and it's a beautiful demonstration of the power of the "Dash." Remember the little moments in your life can have the greatest impact.

"It is He who reveals profound hidden things...." The more I live, the more I witness that so many answers to our questions about life are right in front of us, waiting to be discovered. Through faith and patience we can learn to be in the moment-each moment, and as we pay attention to the signs and signals around us, we can learn to communicate with greater clarity and with the intention of conveying our message clearly and with care and support for the other person. As I practice this, it's like I discover an entirely new world, and it's been right there, all the time!!! I almost feel like Dorothy in "The Wizard of Oz!!" Remember the lesson she learned was that everything she ever needed was right in her own backyard-she just had to know **HOW** to look for it. That's probably the key to each one of us living our lives successfully and with purpose in that space known as "The Dash." Someone once said that life is not filled with the number of breaths we take, but with the moments that take our breath away, and as we learn to truly **LIVE** each moment, our capacity and ability to be blown away with

appreciation of even the simplest gestures increases, and after all, isn't that what it's all about?

This is the area below where I really want to change because I do not want to be negative about my parents so I feel a need to change some of the alcohol talk.

As I just mentioned, I was raised in a home that, for reasons I don't need to explain, created confusion and dysfunction. My parents tried their best, but back then, self-awareness was not high on the priority list for many people. Maybe that's one of the reasons this topic fascinates me so much. Communication in our household was anything BUT intentional and clear. The little moments that should have made up the dash of my early years were drowned by alcohol. Probably because of that, I am sensitive to distractions today. I also realize that our lives are tending to get more involved and more complicated, even in this age of technological convenience. People-especially young people tend to be more preoccupied than ever before, and it seems that everyone's attention spans are growing shorter and more tentative. I believe that, as we get more and more involved with technology and the distractions they can cause by providing so much information and input, it is our duty, for humanity's sake, to take the time and the care to pay more attention.... to our religious practice, to our own health and well being, to the signs and signals that surround us, and to the way we interact with each other, or we will wind up being a society of solitary, isolated individuals, and that is NOT what God intended for us.

This section above with the blue lines, I am not sure how that really relates to the topic and I know I mentioned it to you back we we first started on this, but I am just not sure about it now.

For those of you who know me, and for all of those new friends that may not know me so well.... yet, please remember that I know that all that **I know**, all that I have, all that I experience and all that I share comes from my passion for, and faith in God, and through him I know that as opportunities present themselves, each one gives us all a chance to witness the miracles that are possible as long as you **BELIEVE**. While some may disregard seemingly insignificant moments like “Buddy unloading the dishwasher,” or Mr. Ransom reaching out and sharing his knowledge of horses, I know and believe that even the smallest of experiences can shine a light, teach a lesson, and give us the opportunity to find even greater appreciation in the little miracles of life, because it’s **THOSE** little things that, when counted together, comprise most of the Dash that we call life.

I think each one of you will agree that as you look back on the moments in your life that mean something, of course the major milestones stand out, but how many of us really look back and treasure those simple moments that formed us and made us who we are? And whether you danced with your Grandma in the kitchen on a Saturday night while she babysat for you, or you helped a child learn how to draw, it’s all a form of communication and it’s all an opportunity to learn about someone and experience the miracle of life. It’s those moments of intense human connection that will form your Dash, and I wish that all of you will work to notice many of them. Celebrate life, love, communication and each other and most of all, your faith. Thank you all!

