

An amazing woman has touched my life over the past week and I am excited to share her story with you in the next two newsletters. I pray that her life affects you and look forward to hearing how God uses her story in your life.

He is a faithful God,
Jennifer

What Are You Known For?

Two weeks ago a 57-year-old Kansas woman, Shirley Neel, passed away. More than 900 people attended her funeral and visitation.

Was Shirley a political figure? A wealthy socialite? An important business owner? Someone famous?

No. By today's standards of importance, there was no reason to notice Shirley; she was "just a mother." Yet more than 900 people were so affected by her that they took the time to pay their respects and show her family how much she meant to them.

Why?

Because of her faith in the Lord.

Shirley didn't preach her faith or write books about it. Busy with 17 kids to raise, she didn't have time to chair ministry teams or be volunteer of the year at church. Shirley simply lived her faith, allowing it to permeate her actions and words each day. Her faith was the center of her life and it affected the people around her: teachers, coaches, store clerks, parents, neighbors, and family.

Shirley was known for her faith.

What are you known for?

Every one of us can be known for our faith, even if we are "just" a mom, or "just" an ordinary person. We each have the opportunity to do God's work, even if we "just" work a regular job or "just" take care of our home. We don't need a ministry or money or power to affect people. Shirley's life attests to that. She didn't wait for the kids to grow up to start letting her faith affect people. She didn't wait until she had a different job or until she knew more about the Bible or until she felt comfortable. She simply let her deep love for the Lord permeate her life. She chose to make every moment count for Him and continually spread His love to others. And it made an impact.

Her faith was so powerful that you and I are learning from it today even though we didn't know her.

You have the same opportunity as Shirley, to live out your love for the Lord in all you do. When people think of you, do they think of your faith? When you leave a store, is the clerk left with a smile? When someone talks to you, are they encouraged? When you are no longer here, will others still look to your life for faithful encouragement and peace in the tough times?

What do you want to be known for?

Are you living your life in a way that you will be known for this?

I want to be known as a woman who loved the Lord. Not a woman who was perfect, popular, or powerful, but as a woman who praised Him with every breath. I have a long way to go, but I will remember the amazing work God did through Shirley and be encouraged. I will stop taking my moment-to-moment life for granted, looking for the "big" opportunities, and each day focus on using where He puts me and what He gives me to show my love for Him.

What will you do?

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Dig Deeper

Grab your notebook and Bible and get ready to explore. **Don't rush through!** Take your time to wander through the scripture and let God speak to you.

Looking for earlier lessons? You can print them at http://www.hopeinthelord.org/Downloadable_PDF_Bible_Study_Files.html

Lesson 1

Pray for God's wisdom and then begin.

1. From Genesis 15:6, what made Abram righteous?
2. Read Romans 3:21-25.
 - a. What should we have faith in?
 - b. What "comes through" this faith?
 - c. Who does it go to?
 - d. Who needs this faith & why (v. 23)?
3. Read Romans 3:24-26.
 - a. Where does redemption come from (v. 24)?
 - b. Define "atonement."
 - c. From Leviticus 17:11 and 22:19-20, what is the requirement for an atonement sacrifice?
 - d. From Romans 10:25, John 1:29, Hebrews 10:4 and 10:10, how does Jesus fill this role?
4. In the Old Testament system, before Jesus gave His life to atone for our sins, sacrifices had to be made over and over for sin. Jesus' death paid the penalty for sin – past, present, and future – once and for all. It is by God's grace that we have the faith to believe in the atoning redemption of Christ's blood.
 - a. Do you have the faith to believe and accept Jesus' death as the sacrifice for your sins?
 - b. If so, what does Romans 4:3 tell you about how God views you?

Lesson 2

Pray for God's wisdom and then begin.

1. Prayerfully consider:
 - a. What are you known for?
 - b. What do you want to be known for?
2. Read Genesis 14:13. Abram (a.k.a. Abraham, see Genesis 17:3-8) was known as "Abram the _____."
"Hebrew" is interchangeable with "Israelite" or "Jew," designating one of God's people.
3. According to Hebrews 11:1, what is faith?
4. Read Hebrews 11:1-3. What additional thoughts do you have about faith?
5. Describe your "faith."
6.
 - a. What is the object of your faith? Is it in the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins?
 - b. Have you accepted this for yourself? Have you personally accepted Jesus as *your* Savior, asking Him to forgive *your* sins and wash *you* clean?
 - c. Have you surrendered to your faith? Do you put the Lord and His will for your life above your own? Do you live for Him, obeying Him and desiring to please Him, and not yourself?
7. Read Matthew 8:23-27. What do you learn about faith from this passage?

8. Read Matthew 17:14-20. What do you learn about faith from this passage?
9. Read Mark 2:1-5. What do you learn about faith from this passage?
10. Read Mark 5:21-34. What do you learn about faith from this passage?
11. a. Is your faith in the Lord more similar to that of the disciples in Matthew passages, or more like the woman and men in the Mark passages? Why?
b. Pray and ask God to speak truth to your heart, showing you where your faith is lacking.
c. What did God impress upon you?
12. Again, what do you want to be known for? What will you do; what changes will you make to be known for this?

I read the Bible for the first time about 8 years ago. I started with the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) that recount the story of Jesus' time on earth. The one thing that struck me over and over again was Jesus' teaching on faith. He can do great and amazing things in our lives when we put our faith in Him; when we trust Him completely at all times and in all situations.

Shirley Neel raised 17 kids with patience and a smile. Hearing her daughter tell her story stirs something deep in your heart, making you aware of how special her life was and how great an impact it is still having. It is all because of her faith - her trust and belief - in Jesus Christ, her Lord and Savior.

Her faith carried her to the very end. Next time, I'll share that amazing and encouraging story with you.

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I pray that the Lord will pour out His grace on you, giving you the faith to move mountains, cast out demons, stay calm in the storm, and be fully healed. I pray that He will multiply your faith so greatly that you will become known as a woman of faith. I pray that your faith life will shine through each moment of every day, spreading the Lord's love and changing lives and hearts for Him.

In faith that He will do all this and so much more in your life,
Jennifer