

News Story Summary

A major television network recently conducted an interview of two families regarding an experience that took place nine years ago. Information from this interview was reported widely by other news agencies.

The story began 9 years ago with a crash between a tractor trailer and a van full of students and staff from Taylor University. Five students were killed and others were rushed into emergency care. Whitney Cerak's parents received the news that their daughter had not survived. The parents of Laura Van Ryn were told that their daughter had survived but was severely injured, unable to speak, and was unrecognizable.

For five weeks the Van Ryn family lovingly sat by Laura's bedside and prayed for her recovery. Then they started to notice things, which were a little confusing. Her teeth looked a little different than before. When Laura was able to speak, she was asked to state her name. She answered "Whitney!" It was actually Laura who had passed away more than a month before, and the girl who was recovering was Whitney Cerak! Both families had the job of coming to terms with the news! They all relied on their abounding faith, and a strong bond developed between the two families.

Whitney recovered and was married in the same church in which her funeral had been held. She now has three children. When the two families were interviewed recently, they all acknowledged that the journey had been difficult, but they all agreed that it was their faith in God that had kept them strong and helped them persevere. "There are just some things that can't be explained, but the faith that we have in God has gone so deep. Even in the midst of the crisis it's been that which really has given us the strength to get through all this," said Laura's father. He also once said, "We don't think we're remarkable people; we think we serve a remarkable God. It's not about the amount of our faith or the quality of our faith; it's about the object of our faith, that's God and Jesus Christ. That's what gets us through."

(For more on this story, search the Internet using the phrase "Matt Lauer's interview with the Cerak and Van Ryn families.")

Focus Attention

Call attention to the title of today's lesson, "Faith Demonstrated." Ask the group to listen as you share the news story about two families who demonstrated their faith to the world as they endured an extremely painful experience. After sharing, ask: *How would you characterize the faith demonstrated by these two families? How different do you think this story would have been had one or both of these families had lacked faith in God?*

Explain that in today's session, the group will look at the faith of a man trying to help a trusted household servant. Challenge them to look for ways the centurion demonstrated faith in Jesus and to be prepared to compare their faith to his faith.

Challenge

Remind the group of the news story about the two families. Lead the group to discuss the role their faith in God plays in how they approach life. Direct them to compare the faith exhibited by the centurion to the faith being exhibited by the Ceraks and Van Ryns.

Challenge group members to approach God with boldness in faith, and to be strengthened whenever and however their prayers are answered.