

Steve Strang: Spiritual Lessons I Learned From My 85-Year-Old Mother

Last week, while the nation grimaced watching the government shut down, I had a very nice week. That's because I ignored what was going on in Washington in order to welcome my sister and brother to town. Our family hosted a party for my mom, Amy Strang, who celebrated her 85th birthday Oct. 3.

So how does my mom's birthday and my family reunion apply to you? Each of us has a mom, and if yours is still with us you can relate to the feeling it gives you when you do something nice for her. Or maybe it will give you some ideas! It also gives me a chance to give you a peek into my personal world and to honor a great woman of God who has taught me a lot and influenced my life.

My brother, Paul, traveled from Lexington, Ky., and my sister, Karen Strang Whittington, came from Paso Robles, Calif. We hadn't gotten together for six years. We were able to reminisce while we visited the beautiful campus of Southeastern University in Lakeland, where our dad was a professor from 1962 to 1969.

Since my dad passed away 15 years ago, Mom has lived near me. At 85, she's moving a little more slowly than she used to, and you have to sometimes repeat what you say. But she enjoys good health, lives alone, drives where she wants to go and has her own circle of friends. We invited some of those friends and family into our home for a party in Mom's honor. Our friends enjoyed a little video of her life, and she even led a time of worship that I posted on Facebook.

I am thankful for my godly heritage. My mom is a third-generation Pentecostal—both of her parents were ordained

Assemblies of God ministers, and both of her grandmothers received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which made them pioneer Pentecostals even though they were all born long before the Azusa Street revival of 1906.

My mom has spent her life as a pastor's wife, a housewife and a schoolteacher. In the process, she raised three children who are all serving the Lord, and her nine grandchildren are all serving God. She influenced hundreds of students over the years. She also taught these principles to me and to my siblings as well as to the children she educated:

- **She taught a love of God's Word.** We three kids were learning Scriptures by heart before we could read. Decades later, I still read the Word daily, and next year the highlight of my life will be to publish a new translation of the Bible called the Modern English Version.
- **She taught us to pray.** Long before intercessory prayer was widely discussed in Christian circles, my mom spent hours praying for her family and the world. Paul remembers her finding a place in the utility room in our small home where she could seek God without disturbing the family. Today she still intercedes, mainly for the persecuted church. I thought all mothers prayed like that until as an adult I realized most didn't.
- **She gave me a love for Israel.** One of the first books I remember getting when I was barely old enough to read was about the miracle of Israel being born as a nation in 1948.
- **She gave me a love for missions.** I remember my mom listening to ministries on the radio before our family got a television. She and my dad supported World Vision through our church when it was barely a decade old and tiny compared to what it is today. She knew and supported Dick Eastman and Every Home for Christ long before I got to know him through ministry circles years

later.

- **She gave us a moral bearing and a strict upbringing.** I didn't realize how strict she was until I was older. But there was no "worldly entertainment." And the only "drug" problem in our family is that we kids were drug to church every time the doors were open—Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday prayer meeting, youth group meetings and every revival meeting in the area.
- **She lives an example of a Christian life.** Never did we hear our parents say one thing and do something else. We didn't hear other denominations criticized; there was no racial prejudice in our home; there was no resentment, unforgiveness or coarse jesting. Because most of our Christian friends were like that, it was a shock to me as a teen to learn all families weren't that way.

By no means was our upbringing perfect. My tenderhearted mom used to chastise herself because the Bible says, "Be perfect as I am perfect, says the Lord," and she felt she wasn't perfect enough. But there was a stability that has stood me and my siblings well over the years in a world that is increasingly unstable.

I'm thankful for my mom, and I wish her a happy birthday. If you know my mom, leave her a greeting in the comments below. Or leave a message about your own mom for others to read and appreciate.

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