



Death Ain't What It Used to Be

Get a load of this lead sentence from *Reuters Health* last December: “Women who go through menopause in their early 40s may have a slightly higher risk of death later on in life compared with their peers, a large U.S. study suggests.”

Imagine it, a slightly higher risk of death later in life. Apparently, some women have a slightly lower risk of death later in life. Death must not be as inevitable as we all thought.

Hmmm. Who pays for these studies, anyway?

Actually, of course, the study itself made sense—it showed that women who go through menopause in their early 40s may not live quite as long after the age of 75 as women who go through menopause later than their early 40s.

The presentation was misleading—not the study. Sometimes it's like that with the gospel too.

Presented poorly, even the gospel can be misunderstood. And sad to say, there's a lot of that going around these days.

The gospel is actually good news. It exposes the chink that Jesus put in death's armor. It promises a new life beyond death, a life rich in joy, peace, friendship and love. A life in harmony with a God who loves you and wants you with him no matter who you are, where you've been or what you've done.

But it's not always presented that way. Sometimes the gospel is presented as a way to get big cars, big houses and fancy clothes right now. Just “name it and claim it” people are told.

Sometimes it's presented as an austere framework of rules and regulations overseen by an angry God who'll roast you forever if you don't toe the line.

Sometimes the gospel is presented as a glorious pyramid scheme in which the more pious salespeople you fast-talk into joining, the greater your eternal income will be.

Jesus said, “...let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

But some believers let their pushy, memorized spiels so grate before people that given a choice, I suspect that most people would rather live next door to a used car salesman than to a Bible-thumping evangelical Christian.

If we could all do it the way Jesus said to, if we could all let our light shine in such a way that people are won over instead of put off, imagine what a positive reputation the good news could have.

If only we could present the gospel the way it really is—as a new life in Christ, a life of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (see Galatians 5:22-23) instead of as some wacky caricature that misrepresents both the gospel and Jesus.

I wonder if there might be some merit in placing our emphasis on being the kind of people that Jesus said his disciples would be rather than just telling people what to believe. Wouldn't that win more people over to the real power of the gospel?

The chink in death's armor is love, after all, not memorized testimonies. Testimonies have their place, but it's love—God's love—that overthrows death and hell. And people can digest genuine, godly love a whole lot easier than fast talk, pushy questions and judgmental frowns. The proof is in the pudding, not in reciting the recipe.

Large U.S. studies show that we all have a slightly higher risk of death today than we did yesterday. But because God loves us, because his Son died for us and now lives for us, death has had its teeth pulled.

Like the old gray mare, death ain't what it used to be. And that good news is worth living for.

Why not show someone today? □

—J. Michael Feazell

Because God loves us, because his Son died for us and now lives for us, death has had its teeth pulled. Like the old gray mare, death ain't what it used to be.