

Life and death - An early education

Dan Nelson

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Some say that there are two sure things in life, death and taxes. Since I first heard the saying many years ago, my own experiences seem to validate this as reality. With the April 15 deadline still in our recent memories, many are still feeling the sting of their annual tax obligation. But it isn't governmental financial support that I want to talk to you about, it is the other side of the equation; death.

I just had a conversation with 5-year-old Shannon. She told me how her daddy just died on Friday and that she was feeling pretty sad about it. She explained that his body was at a medical school but his soul was "up in heaven." My heart broke to be having this talk with a little girl who should be just thinking about hide and go seek games and jumping on trampolines. The fact is we were just doing both of those things together mere moments ago, along with many other children who experienced this same loss. You see, Shannon is the youngest of 13 full, half, and step brothers and sisters of which I am second to the oldest. I am not merely here as a pastor, but as a brother. For many of the older siblings, this is the second time to memorialize the loss of a father. Eleven years ago a similar gathering took place with five children under age 11 plus my sister Lonnie was not even born yet; together we cried and ate, played and prayed. Pain upon pain some might say and yet the Bible says, "O death, where is your sting?"

For some, the discussion around the issues relating to death remains simply theoretical, philosophical or theological. While we have all been touched by death, it seems some have been forced to look at it close up.

The Bible teaches a direct correlation between the sin in this world and death, that we all sin and therefore we all die. We are also taught that Jesus came to save us from the consequences of our sin and give us life. Knowing that he loves you and wants you near is a strong motivation to follow Jesus. It is also a source of comfort when someone

you love dies. Shannon is only 5. She doesn't understand what the concept of religion is, doctrinal debates, or that there are differences in what people believe. She believes in Jesus and that her daddy is in heaven. What better comfort can you bring her?

Jesus said you must approach me with the faith of a child. I wish more grown-ups realized how simple life and death is. Life is real, death is real, Jesus is real, eternal life is real, and "peace that surpasses understanding" is also real.

Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. This article was published in 2005. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
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Mid-Week Study:

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