

Who, Me, An Evangelist?

Katrina Rae Daughenbaugh



What comes to mind when we hear the word *evangelist*? The apostles? The four writers of the gospels? A TV minister? What exactly is an evangelist? The dictionary defines it as: 1) a person who seeks to convert others to the Christian faith, 2) a layperson engaged in Christian missionary work, 3) a zealous

advocate of something. My definition is a person who is called and chooses to serve God to further build God's kingdom here on earth.

BEING CALLED

It doesn't matter whether God is calling you, you just think he is calling you, you have a church position, or you simply want to do something for God or church. Serving God is the issue. He takes what you give, blesses it, forms it to his desire, and uses it to his Will.

I left a successful country music career to sing gospel music only because I thought I had a better chance of becoming a singing star. While working with a gospel record label, they realized I was Catholic and — for many business reasons — asked me to “re-affiliate” my church. At first I thought I would, but by end of day, I knew I couldn't deny my Catholic faith nor pretend to be Protestant for the sake of a record deal. I was devastated at how things had turned out; I thought my singing career was over and I spent months whining to God. One day he allowed me to see a glimpse of myself in his eyes: selfish, spoiled, self-willed. I was horrified at myself. Yet, despite my behavior, God chose that moment to call me to sing in the Catholic Church, and I accepted.

I began my ministry soon after. I simply sang songs of worship and shared my witness. I had no idea what the response would be. Gradually, I received feedback that the ministry was helping many people on their faith journey. So, regardless of my initial intent or reasons, God was able to bless and use my efforts to help build his kingdom. He does the same for all his evangelists.

RESPONSE

It's easy for some people to have confidence but for many of us, confidence can be shattered by small things. We see our lacks, negatives, shortcomings, sinfulness, and believe we are unable or unworthy to serve in a meaningful way. But, God is great beyond our understanding. He knows us intimately and still calls us. He doesn't force us into service; we can say, “no”

or “yes, Lord, send me!” There is nothing we require that he can't or won't give. Once we accept God's call, we often realize we have more of the needed skills than we initially thought. And, amazingly, God sends assistance of just the right thing at just the right moment to help us along.

You don't have to be an expert in religion or faith formation. Prepare and study the best you can for the job to which God calls you, then let him take care of the rest. Respond with your heart and put your faith in God that he will groom, guide, and inspire you. With God, nothing is impossible.

APPROACH

Imagine going to the store and being treated poorly by the clerk. Negative vibes far outweigh any great sales you may get. You might wonder why the clerk stays working there while being so unpleasant. And you might wonder why the store employs such a negative worker. Consequently, you might decide to shop elsewhere in the future.

When we serve God, we don't want to be like that store employee. We need to follow through our *yes!* response in a gracious and positive way so those we are evangelizing can see the great and positive power of God. We want people to feel appreciated and welcomed when we are sharing our faith with them. We don't want to undo what good God has already done in them by acting aggressive, defensive, removed, superior, or unpleasant in any way. If we strive to serve as Jesus served us, we will be powerful in our outreach.

EMPOWERMENT

The following are three important tools absolutely needed by an evangelist:

1. A close relationship with God

There was a time when I felt too busy to pray. I really loved God but I had young children, a husband, a house, and a long to-do list. I started my day at the crack of dawn and dropped into bed after midnight exhausted from the day. Prayer time didn't fit in. I began to miss my time with God and realized that I needed it. I tried to schedule prayer into my daily routine but it always got pushed aside by other demands. Then, I realized God never required undivided attention. Suddenly I did have times each day when I could pray and talk to Him. It started with a simple, “Good morning, Heavenly Father,” as I climbed out of bed. Then I prayed while I made beds, brushed my teeth, cooked meals, did the laundry, etc. You name it,

there was time! God was no longer distant from me. He was once again an intimate partner and the graces I received from my time with him were wonderful.

I still do those frequent prayers with God. Over the years I've learned to listen as well as speak. It's amazing the direction, inspiration, and support I receive!

God is near and present for everyone if we choose to have a relationship with him. He is always offering himself to us. It's up to us to link to him. It will strengthen and guide us as we serve him. On our own we are like little pebbles in a stream. Society washes over us and drags us in its direction. But a close relationship with God makes us strong and firm... like a large boulder. The secular world can push and tug at us but nothing can pull us away from our Lord. We know him and are eager followers.

2. Accept healing

We enter this world with hearts of love, peace, and goodness. As we journey through life, many hardships and painful events occur. Maybe we had painful childhoods, maybe someone we loved let us down or deserted us, maybe we were abused in some way. The causes of pain are endless. We try to take these hurts in stride. We store them in our hearts hoping the anger, disappointment, pain, sadness, or sorrow will fade away. Eventually, our hearts become so filled with pain there's no room left for the one thing that can heal us — the love of Jesus.

For years I ministered and spoke of the wonderful love of God. I knew about it, I believed in it, but couldn't actually feel it. Privately I wondered, "Shouldn't I be able to feel such a wonderful love?" I felt like a cripple trying to teach people to run. How could they learn from me how great was God's love when I couldn't feel it myself?

One night I was working very late preparing for a concert and practicing a song called *Silent Weeper*. I had sung it many

times but its message had not impacted me. However, that night the song went deep within me and I suddenly realized I was a silent weeper. My heart was so filled with pain from the junk of life there was absolutely no room for God's love. I realized I wanted to be rid of the pain; I needed healing. I began to pray and ask God to take away all the pain so that I could feel his love instead. But it seemed my prayer was just bouncing off the wall. Then, I sensed God was telling me he would not take the pain from me. I had to give it to Him. That seemed easy enough to do. So I began to pray again but when I got to where I would give my pain to God, I stopped. I was afraid to let go of the pain. It was a part of me. I knew how to get through life with it. I wasn't sure I wanted to give it up.

But I needed healing and I wanted to feel the love of Jesus. I resolved to let go and I started my prayer over, but I choked. This time because I realized I'd have to forgive all those who were part of the pain, including myself and I wasn't sure I wanted to do that. After a few moments, I determined to forgive and began my prayer anew. But again I choked. This time because I was terrified I would give my pain to God, forgive the transgressors, and then not get healed. If that happened I'd be devastated — it would be the final unbearable pain.

Everything in me was now crying out for healing. I loved God and I had to trust Him. I began the prayer one last time and gave God all my trust as I mentally visualized laying at His feet all my anger, disappointment, hurt, pain, and sorrow. As I finished my prayer, I had a good cry and went to bed.

The next morning was typically busy as the children got off to school and my husband left for work. I began my usual routine, and as I worked, I realized I felt good — really good! So good it seemed I was almost floating. It was a feeling that I hadn't felt since I was a child. Then I realized why I felt so good: the prayer for healing. Had God healed my heart? I tried to remember sorrows I could have recited with ease the previous day. Nothing. I couldn't remember anything painful.



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God had healed me, and my heart was now filled with the love of Jesus. I was no longer a silent weeper.

That healing has held even through some very hard and sad events. Several times I've wondered, "Is this pain so great that it will overtake my heart and lock out Jesus's love?" "Will I become a silent weeper again." The answer? Jesus was in my heart. His love softens the pains that happen in life. Jesus's healing is permanent — just like his love.

You might be a silent weeper. God doesn't want us in emotional pain. He created us as a reflection of his great love. God wants us to accept his healing so he can dwell in our hearts giving us the love we need to live on earth. We just have to trust he will heal us. Jesus carried the heavy wooden cross to Calvary to set you free from sin.

Will he not carry your pains to free you from your silent weeping? I hope you choose to give your pain to Jesus. Once healed, you can truly become a fruitful witness to God's great love.

3. Rely on the power of the Holy Spirit

We've studied, prepared, built a closer relationship with God, and we've received healing for life's pains. What more could an evangelist need? Quite simply, we need the Holy Spirit behind all we do in the name of the Lord. Trying to serve under our own power is useless. The Holy Spirit is our power.

In 1991, our pastor formed a committee to examine whether our parish should begin small faith communities. For one year we attended seminars and read books to learn about various models of these faith-sharing groups.

The second year we became a sample community to see what we gained from the experience. When that year was over we decided to do small faith communities. But, living in Nashville where there were only about 6 percent Catholics surrounded by fundamental Christians, we wanted books that encompassed our situation. We also wanted a weekly outreach for each member and a bi-annual outreach for each group. None of the books available filled our need. One night Father asked me to write the book. I was stunned and overwhelmed with fear and inadequacy, but I said yes.

I had no idea how to write a Bible study guide and had very little time. The first book needed to be written and printed in less than seven weeks. I was positive I could not do it; I was a singer, not a writer. However, Father seemed so sure about it. I had no place to go but to my Heavenly Father. So I prayed and turned the project over to him.

Inspiration flooded into me. I bought numerous commentaries on the Book of Mark and studied them. Every night I

dreamed how to formulate the weekly sessions. By morning, I had settled one more factor in writing the book.

Finally, I had to actually sit down and begin writing. I prayed and reminded God I had no ability to write so please send his Holy Spirit to inspire and lead me. And, guess what? The book just flowed out of me. Discussion questions, outreaches — everything — just kept flowing. I worked about 12 hours a day, afraid to quit for fear of losing the inspiration. But each morning I deferred to the Holy Spirit again, and he dictated as I typed. The book turned out exactly as our pastor wanted. And for the next 12 years, every six months, I sat down with the Holy Spirit to write new books for the small faith communities. After completing each book, I was amazed at the content as if I had never seen it before.

Do I believe in the power of the Holy Spirit? Absolutely. We cannot bear fruit on our own. It's only through the power of the Holy Spirit that we can evangelize where and how we are called. He is our courage, inspiration, power, and strength.

ONE LAST SHARING

One day a person called our ministry office interested in having me minister in his parish. As the conversation between my husband and him progressed he asked, "What are Katrina's credentials?" Well, I don't have any theological degrees; my college major was chemistry. I don't even have formal music training. My talents are all God-given and God-trained. But the man wanted qualifications. My husband looked over at me and repeated the question. Without pause I answered, "I am called to serve God and evangelize in this world just as the apostles were called to serve and evangelize." Well, that answer didn't satisfy the caller and he didn't invite me to his parish. But I knew I had stated the simple truth. That's exactly what I am — called to serve and evangelize.

I am a broken vessel serving the Lord. I am an evangelist — a Catholic, lay evangelist. I suspect you might be one also. Now is a good time to recognize who and what you are. Repeat after me: I am an evangelist! ■

Katrina Rae Daughenbaugh is an award-winning singer and songwriter. She has served as a youth minister and as parish council Director of Parish Life/Evangelism at Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Community in Hendersonville, Tennessee. Also for 13 years, Katrina served as the director and coordinator for the parish's small faith communities.

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