

# 24/7

## Worship In Real Time

By Cathy Townley

### KEEPING IT REAL

For several years I was on staff at a 4000 in worship, Evangelical Mainline church. There I met a few people who had the Spiritual gift of evangelism as identified in Ephesians 4. A couple times, I witnessed them sharing the gospel with virtual strangers and right then, those persons accepted Christ. True story.

But as I tell it, I feel a slight sense of risk knowing it's edgy in certain contexts. Many mainliners don't think of evangelism as supernaturally driven. We don't use the language of "sharing the gospel" or "accepting Christ." The idea of someone's conversion doesn't match our theology. It's too charismatic. And we've not seen someone do something like that where it seemed authentic. Fair enough.

What most of us have seen are attempts at evangelism that are so offensive, they've turned us off to the topic altogether. An acquaintance accosts you to ask you if you know where you're going when you die. The televangelist grandstands in front of a crowd as people fall down slain in the Spirit. Our skin is crawling, our stomachs turning, and we're fleeing at breakneck speed. Who can blame us?

But we mainliners may have gone too far demonizing the e-word. We're living in an unchurched era. No one is flocking to our buildings the way they once did. If you want to reach new people you have to go to them. That's evangelism. How do we reach out when we disdain it so?

Seeing and believing changed my perspective on at least two fronts. One was in recognizing that Christi-

anity doesn't fall into neat and predictable packages. God's power is God's power even if it doesn't fit into my world-view.

Two is in self-differentiation. Some are evangelists and I'm not one of them, nor do I want to be. Yet Jesus told us all to go and baptize. God must have provided us *some* measure of ability for it, since God's gifting is true. If we're not "share the gospel" people, we're something else.

God has created in us a huge capacity for worship. It's how we meet God, each other, and ourselves. It's a bumpy road filled with ups and downs, every one of which is another story of faith we can discuss with people we already know, not strangers like in the opening story. They can relate because their life is filled with ups and downs too. Hearing a faithful perspective from someone they're learning to trust brings hope.


But it's our motivation that is the key. We are not telling others about God's activity in our own lives, and maybe theirs too, in order to get a conversion. That's not our job. It's for us to remain true to the faith journey and real in our relationships. If we can't talk about

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our faith, then how true is that relationship, and how true is our faith?

One thing I have noticed in the few spiritually gifted evangelists I've known personally is the capacity of their hearts for loving God and people. They share their gift in order to connect the two. We can all do that. We just need to be ourselves. 

*Cathy's book Missional Worship is about growing comfortable as a worshipper, which leads to invitation and welcoming others in relevant ways into Christian community and to your worship service (see ad). Cathy also has free resources for learning methods of outreach at [TownleyCoaching.com/downloads/](http://TownleyCoaching.com/downloads/)*

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