

ANNIE THE EVANGELIST

I RECOGNIZED the power of Annie's rescue story. And so did others. I began telling the story at churches around Iowa. Annie always accompanied me, and she delighted and entertained audiences with her routine of tricks.

Annie loved meeting people, especially children. However, Annie didn't always act like a proper evangelist. At home, she couldn't be trusted—she chewed books to shreds and tore pillows open, leaving piles of stuffing all over. Any food within her reach was fair game. Annie remembered starving. Leave a cookie on the coffee table, and she would be licking her lips when you returned.

But her worst misbehaviors occurred when we walked in the woods. Annie found any dead animal within sniffing range. Now I am not talking just a little dead, but really dead—reeking-of-odor dead. And then she rolled in it. Not just a once-over. She spun this way and that and rubbed the *eau-de-decay* onto her shoulder and a bit behind her ear and then all the way to the tip of her tail.

“Oh, Annie,” I gasped as she bounced up to me. I tried to avoid her, tried to breathe through my mouth, tried just to get a breath without gagging. “Evangelists don't roll in dead things!”

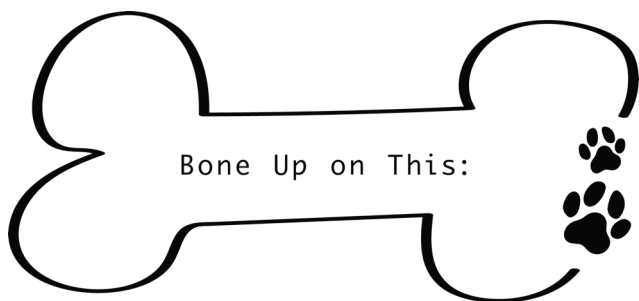
Then I thought—all Christians are called to be evangelists. Do I

ever roll in dead things? Oh, I don't mean lie down on the ground and rub my back over a dead possum in the field. But do I do or say things offensive to people who need to hear about Jesus?

In 2 Corinthians, Paul describes Christians as the *aroma of Christ*. Do I exude the aroma of Jesus? The aroma of life? I wonder if I smell like Jesus when I argue. I wonder if I smell like Jesus when I'm unkind to others. I wonder if I smell like Jesus when I gossip about other people.

Annie never knew when she would accompany me to a school or church or retreat. I did my best to keep her from rolling on dead animals because instead of children wrapping their arms around Annie and saying, "I love this dog!" there would be a whole chorus of "Yuuuck!" and "Ew!"

We never know who is watching or listening to us, either. It might be someone who doesn't know Jesus. If we're doing offensive things, they never smell that sweet fragrance of Jesus, which is everlasting life. We may be their only chance to see or meet or know Jesus. Let's not blow it by rolling in dead things.



For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life.

2 Corinthians 2:15-16



Lord, help me to be the carrier of Your fragrance to others.

