

Billy Joe Daugherty Remembered for His Passion for Evangelism

✖ Pastor Billy Joe Daugherty was remembered as a compassionate leader with a passion for evangelism during a four-hour memorial service held Monday in Tulsa, Okla.

Daugherty, founder of 17,000-member Victory Christian Center in Tulsa, died Nov. 22 of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. He was 57.

The memorial service drew 8,000 people to the Oral Roberts University (ORU) Mabee Center, and included remarks from such speakers as Bethany World Prayer Center pastor Larry Stockstill, ORU Board Chairman Mart Green and Nigerian Bishop David Oyedepo.

"Today we are celebrating a great man," Lakewood Church co-founder Dodie Osteen said. "Billy Joe Daugherty—a man of faith, a man of God, a man of integrity. The Bible says if we walk in integrity we will not stumble. I never heard of Billy Joe Daugherty stumbling because he walked in integrity."

"Everybody that I know in the world loved Billy Joe," healing evangelist Oral Roberts said by video. "They were touched by his remarkable Christian life and his desire to touch them and lift them up. ... His preaching was full of Jesus."

Through 30 years of ministry, Daugherty helped plant ministries around the world and founded the International Victory Bible Institute, which has more than 900 campuses worldwide; the Victory World Missions Training Center; and the Tulsa Dream Center, which provides food, clothing and medical services to needy families.

He served on several boards, including that of his alma mater, ORU, and was Oklahoma director for Christians United for Israel.

Daugherty's wife and Victory co-pastor, Sharon Daugherty, said her husband suffered with what seemed to be a virus in his throat in 1989.

At that time, one specialist said Daugherty may have had a rare disease called chronic lymphatic leukemia, but the diagnosis was never firm.

Daugherty said three days later, while he was still in the hospital, her husband sensed God telling him he was healed. Soon after, Daugherty's health improved, and he continued preaching.

He showed no signs of the illness again until a year and a half ago when his neck began to swell during a trip to Rwanda. He was treated by the same specialist he had seen nearly 20 years before, and his health again improved until this summer when he was hospitalized with what doctors initially believed was a virus.

In October, when he announced that he had been diagnosed with lymphoma, he told his congregation he was standing in faith for healing while cooperating with

medical professionals.

"He's the kind of person who wanted to stand strong and not cause people fear," Sharon Daugherty said. "He didn't want people to be shaken."

Christians worldwide joined him in prayer, and during the memorial service Sharon Daugherty cautioned them not to lose confidence in the power of prayer.

"I know sometimes people think, well if prayers, if they don't go the way we thought that they were going to go we just stop praying. No, that would be like stopping breathing," she said.

"I just wanted to encourage you with Luke 18:1-men ought always to pray and not faint and not give up and not quit," she added. "That's very important because you and I need prayer. Prayer is communication with God the Father. No matter what we face in life, we need our communication with God."

She said her husband was motivated by a passion to reach people with the gospel and see them empowered. "Whatever he did he did with a motive to reach people," she said, adding that he launched the Bible schools and missions training center to that end. "He did it because he loved people."

A video tribute of Daugherty shown near the end of the service closed with the pastor giving an invitation to salvation.

Bible teacher Kenneth Copeland told Sharon Daugherty that the ministry's best years were to come.

"You thought you've seen something in the past; dear heart you haven't seen anything yet," Copeland said. "The word that came alive in your heart and your life has ... grown stronger. So sorrow not, dear one, but rejoice. The greatest things are in your future."

In closing the service, Bible teacher John Bevere echoed that sentiment. He said Daugherty's life was given as a seed, and he challenged attendees to imitate the pastor's commitment to reach the lost.

"We are all sons and daughters of Billy Joe and Sharon Daugherty," Bevere said. "Now it is our responsibility to go and multiply his ways in Christ."

"There will be more people come into the kingdom of God as a result of this man's life going into the ground as a seed," he continued. "More will come to the Lord than his entire years of ministry on this earth. And it will happen. I speak it in Jesus' name."

In addition to his wife, Daugherty is survived by his mother, Iru Daugherty, and his four children Sarah Wehrli, Ruthie Sanders, John Daugherty and Paul Daugherty.