

Lighthouse Keeper



EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

July 2007

Evangelism An Interview with Pastor Jeff Byerly

Lighthouse Keeper

We are pleased that you read the Lighthouse Keeper, and that you wanted to respond and share your ideas. But we are intrigued that you claim your thoughts are not so much presentation and event, but rather focus on philosophy. Please tell us more.

Jeff Byerly

Well, truth be told, I'm not much for the canned presentation. And I don't have an event to talk about this moment. But I do have three scenarios that might help flesh out my philosophy of evangelism. Or at least what I'm currently sharing with others.

L.K.

Why don't you start with the scenario that others might most readily grasp, or for which we can find helpful resources you have accessed.

Jeff

I have been intrigued by the Engel Scale on evangelism which I have seen Jim Ehrman present a few times. We have used it as a teaching tool here at Bethesda in various settings. It's easily found by googling it.

L.K.

"Google it." I like that. We can find just about anything with a few key strokes. And never even leave the comfort of our sofa. I mean, the sacred office chair. By the way, if you're interested, check out the site (<http://guide.gospelcom.net/resources/tellitoften.php>).

Jeff

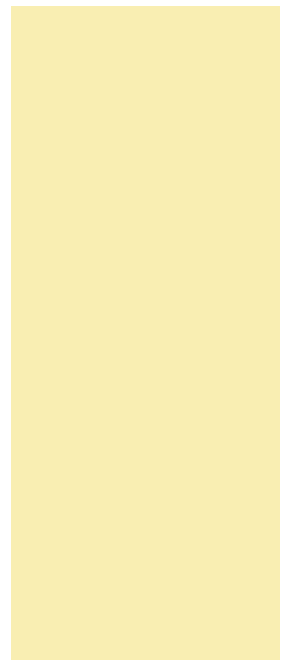
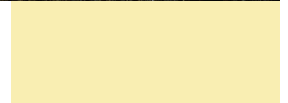
Don Graybill and the Navigators are utilizing a three-part Cultivate, Sow and Harvest approach that is based on the Engel Scale. Their model also evaluates individual, team and corporate approaches to evangelism. When combined with cultivate, sow and harvest, it creates a matrix (that has been difficult for us to fill in). We are only involved at the early discussion level with our outreach team at this point. These concepts are easily teachable and could make for an interesting article helping churches to think outside the box.

L.K.

Could you give us a brief outline of these concepts?

Jeff

Just like the agricultural aspect of turning over earth, spiritual cultivation involves initial rela-



tionship building, which includes many of the practical things I have read about in the Lighthouse Keeper . . . like helping neighbors, showing interest in local clerks in stores that we frequent, and providing resources for helping single moms, etc. After some cultivation, spiritual soil becomes more fertile for sowing—encounters where people become sensitive to the Gospel. Eventually, in some cases a spiritual plant springs forth, and in time spiritual fruit is harvested for God’s kingdom. This occurs when the “lights go on” and people receive Jesus Christ as their Savior. That’s the exciting part! The difficult part is remaining patient (often for years) within this process and sensitive to their challenging arguments when they arise. It’s a life-long investment in true friendship.



L.K.
How does this approach manifest itself in the local church?

Jeff
The thing that we are learning is that we don’t have to impact our neighbors alone. We can move beyond our individual efforts to work in teams, such as when a group of moms are waiting for children to be dismissed from school. This mixture of moms from the church is establishing relationships with unchurched moms from the same community in natural settings. At various times and in different encounters, spiritual conversations are held by different combinations of these same women—some one-on-one and others in groups. In this way, the same person has several different spiritual contacts and opportunities. Corporately, the church can sponsor training events such as parenting classes in the community, Christian/non-Christian mixers such as holding a local festival, and other evangelistic events where people are ready to hear the Gospel. Finally, when we look at our personal, team and corporate forms of evangelism, we must provide vehicles (or opportunities) that emphasize the phases of Cultivating, Sowing and Harvesting in order to complete the process.



L.K.
I see. So, the concepts of personal, team and corporate evangelism each have the components of Cultivate, Sow and Harvest. It makes sense that you say we should not feel alone in our evangelism efforts. This is about the Body, the Church, being Jesus’ voice.

Jeff
I have also been thinking more in terms of cultivation within a post-modern framework.

L.K.
Whoa! Define that for us. Postmodern?

Jeff
Postmodernism is probably best understood as a reaction to what has been defined as modern. This term has been used to describe our culture, entertainment and academics. From this reaction of thought and emotion, people today are more suspicious of organized religious institutions and structures. They typically will not trust the simple story of the Gospel until they trust the messenger who brings it. They want to know that the Gospel makes a difference in real life, especially in their specific circumstances.



**Cultivate, Sow
and Harvest**

L.K.
What I hear you saying is that evangelism today is not merely sharing the Four Spiritual Laws, or

some other canned presentation. Trusting in the Christ who saves often begins with trusting the messenger. It seems the believer needs to do his/her homework before hitting the streets. Besides walking with Jesus in a life-changing manner, how can we prepare for evangelism in a postmodern culture? Are there helpful tools?

Jeff

I don't utilize tools as much as I develop stories. I find myself utilizing these stories more and more at critical times with unbelievers, like at a funeral for a close relative. The time poem of Ecclesiastes 3 is one of my favorite places to start. I have spoken of the events of life as the waves of the ocean. They arrive and disappear. And then I develop the approach that we can only ride the waves, but that God makes the waves. We are responders to life at best. I believe this approach helps the listener realize: 1) life's uncertainty, 2) God's possible reality (as the wave maker), 3) their lack of control, and 4) their need for stability. The question the non-believer is faced with is not: "Do I need to accept Jesus Christ?" Instead it is: "How do I find stability for my life?" This kind of approach much become the starting block. We are too quick in my estimation to offer Jesus without digging up their burning questions.

L.K.

So what you're saying is that we should hold back from jamming the Gospel down their throats. Instead, we should engage pre-Christians in conversations that might lead to a Gospel presentation. The story becomes the key that opens the door for meaningful conversation.

Jeff

Exactly!

L.K.

And your final slice on this vital topic?

Jeff

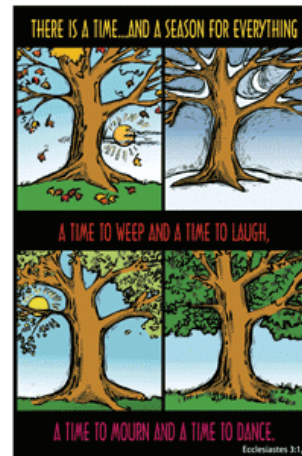
Lastly, I stumbled onto a sermon series that really turned out to be similar to the previous concept. Mark Brooks and I preached a series that went something like:

- 1) Who am I?
- 2) Why am I here?
- 3) What am I experiencing?
- 4) Where am I going?
- 5) How do I get there?

Each question above focuses on a BIG philosophical question people are asking today in their day-to-day lives:

- 1) The Question of Identity
- 2) The Question of Purpose
- 3) The Question of Reality
- 4) The Question of Destiny/Eternity
- 5) The Question of Preparation

As I think about this, perhaps this could be a five-part article for the Lighthouse Keeper utilizing some selected pastors to answer these or other BIG questions asked by people in our culture.



**EVANGELISM
TODAY IS NOT
MERELY
SHARING THE
FOUR
SPIRITUAL
LAWS**



L.K.

This is great material. I agree. Now we need a few pastors to tackle each of these questions for future editions of the Lighthouse Keeper (I hope they are reading this).

Jeff

I know that these suggestions are not practical, per se, but more philosophical in approach.

L.K.

But if we don't have some kind of platform (a philosophy of ministry), we'll blindly run in circles and accomplish nothing, or merely accomplish nothing. A philosophy of ministry helps us establish intentionality in our witness. Thanks for sharing. Let's see if others might be willing to fill in some of the blanks.

Jeff

I would be glad to help develop any of the suggestions. I would prefer even to work in a team of pastors with some of these. I just want to help out where I can.

L.K.

You should choose one before the many volunteers flood my mail box with their requests to flesh out one of your ideas.

For more information, contact:

Jeffrey Byerly, senior pastor

Bethesda E.C. Church "A Healing Community"

155 Reedsville Road, Schuylkill Haven, PA 17972

570-739-2241

www.bethesdaec.org



Wanted: The interview with Pastor Jeff has begun a dialog you can help finish. We're looking for pastors, or others, to flesh out the following topics (Jeff's sermon questions):

- 1) Who am I? (The Question of Identity)
- 2) Why am I here? (The Question of Purpose)
- 3) What am I experiencing? (The Question of Reality)
- 4) Where am I going? (The Question of Destiny/Eternity)
- 5) How do I get there? (The Question of Preparation)

Let's talk! Send your papers or ideas to Pastor Cool (for a future issue of the Lighthouse Keeper) at coolcopy43@comcast.net





EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

100 West Park Avenue
Myerstown, PA 17067

Phone: 800-866-7581

E-mail: eccenter@eccenter.com

Website: www.eccenter.com

Lighthouse Resources

Mission America Coalition (www.missionamerica.org; click “Lighthouse Movement”) is committed to “Uniting Christians for Evangelism and Revival.” The Mission America Coalition (MAC) is helping mobilize Christian leaders and individual Christians to collaborate together to reach America with the love and grace of Jesus Christ. Their mission statement is “The whole Church taking the whole Gospel to the whole Nation—and to the World.” Through encouraging Christians to pray for, care for and share Jesus Christ with every person, the Coalition emphasizes spiritual unity, evangelism and revival. Check out its helpful website.



The Editor Needs to Hear from You:

Ideas! What have you been doing to reach your community? What resources have you used? And what were the results? Drop me a line or two about your successes and failures. Help us help one another in the areas of evangelism, personal or corporate. Please send your ideas and resources to Pastor Cool (for the next issue of the Lighthouse Keeper) at coolcopy43@comcast.net. Let’s keep the flame burning brightly as we share our experiences!