

Seeing Is Believing

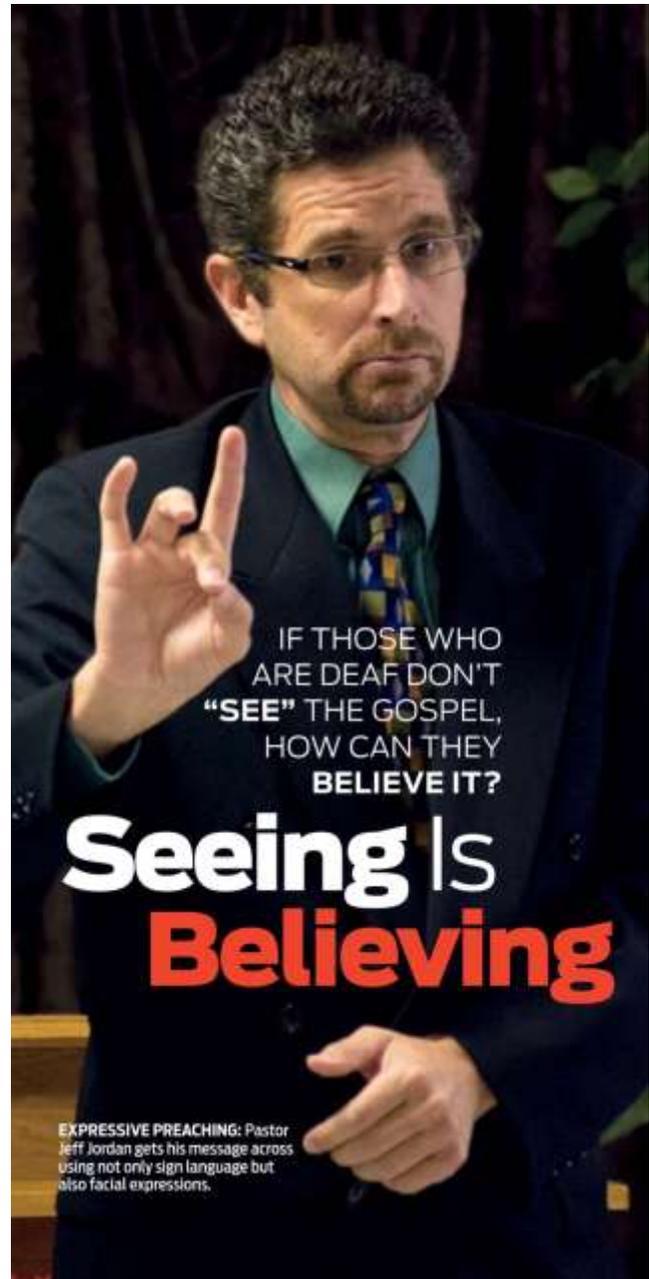
If those who are deaf don't "see" the gospel, how can they believe it?

Por Lisa Poirier com Jeff e Melissa Jordan

All my life I have lived in my own personal bubble—same house, same city, same church, and same school—from preschool through high school graduation. Living the same routine for my first 18 years allowed me to become “comfortable,” as well as afraid to try something new. I didn’t realize until recently how little I knew of the world and people who were different from me, or that I was concerned mostly with my own needs. A language course I took as part of my undergraduate requirements, however, changed all that.

A Life-changing Class

I wanted to enroll in a class that was unique, one that would benefit my music education degree, so I chose American Sign Language (ASL). I thought I could use it to teach my future elementary students how to use signing in songs. My professor was Jeff Jordan, who was born deaf and grew up in California in a hearing family. I was amazed at how easily he bridged the gap for his hearing students so they could understand what he was communicating. Part of the class requirements was to attend five events for those who are hearing-impaired and write a report about our experience. One of the five was attending a local church for deaf people—Southern Deaf Fellowship in Collegedale, Tennessee.¹



Expressive Preaching: Pastor Jeff Jordan gets his message across using not only sign language but also facial expressions.

I was nervous about going, and my heart was pounding as I found a seat in the back row. I was surprised to see that my professor was the pastor of the church, and also that there was a hearing interpreter so hearing members could participate. The members were so kind and friendly. Having a language barrier didn't stop them from smiling and welcoming me, and the longer the service continued, the more I found a smile forming on my own face. I had entered the building feeling nervous, but I left smiling and with a desire to return. And I did return. I wanted to learn more, so I spent time talking with Pastor Jordan and his wife, Melissa. Their love for this ministry was evident.

Before entering through the classroom door of ASL 101 for the first time, I was aware of only the things that affected my own personal life. I knew very little about the Deaf community, and didn't know what to expect when I went to their church. What I found was a congregation of people who were eager to worship, a wife devoted to helping her pastor husband and supporting his ministry, and a pastor passionate about leading his overlooked culture toward Christ.

The Deaf have needs and wants like any church congregation, but they are mostly forgotten. Hearing Pastor Jordan and Melissa's story has changed me. Not only were my eyes opened, but my ears as well. The Deaf do have a voice. Can you hear it?

1 <http://deafchurchonline.org>.



INTERPRETING: Melissa Jordan interprets her husband's sermons for the hearing in the congregation.



FAMILY PHOTO: Pastor Jeff Jordan, his wife, Melissa, and their four boys.



FELLOWSHIPING: Pastor Jeff Jordan (right) talks with church members through signing following church service.

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All photos by Mark Froelich

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