

ILLINOIS IN SIGHT

A merry witnessing technique

Missionaries often use American holidays to share the Gospel with international people. For example, Mother's Day and Father's Day are good conversation starters with people whose religions involve ancestor worship. As believers, we can talk about how we honor our parents as the Bible says, but we reserve worship for God the Father and Jesus the Son.

Campus missionaries use the "holiday" technique, too. Scott and Megan Kelly host special celebrations at their Evanston home across the street from Northwestern University near Chicago. At Thanksgiving, students who were

fascinated by American customs came over for a turkey dinner.

One student from China "wanted to know if mashed potatoes were made from white beans," Megan said. In addition to an explanation of gravy, they received a warm welcome and good helping of God's salvation plan.

"I was so proud of our daughters," Megan said of Anna, 16, and Sophia, 13. "They shared their faith so well." (Their brother Drew, 5, is seated next to Anna in the photo below.)

And Christmas, of course, practically tells its own story.



Home for the holidays: The Kelly family often welcomes international university students to celebrations at their Evanston home. Their story will be featured in the 2014 Mission Illinois Offering and Week of Prayer in September.



Pray for a new church

Location: Melrose Park

Target: This Cook County village is home to recent immigrants from Albania.

Characteristics: The majority of people living in the eastern European country are Muslims; there are very few Albanian evangelical churches in the U.S.

Pray: That leaders will plant the first Albanian-language church among the 60,000-70,000 Albanians in Chicago.

— From the IBSA Church Planting Team



Clip and Share B-101 with

- Pastors
- Church staff
- Discipleship leaders
- Missions leaders
- New members

ABOUT B-101

This is a 20-part study on the basic beliefs and missions of our denomination. It is designed for new believers, new Baptists, and those who want a refresher. Clip it out of the newspaper, fold into a four-page leaflet, and share with the people who would benefit from the information. You might even lead a study. B-101 can be used for:

- New members classes
- Study on missions in Illinois and around the world
- Exploration of doctrines in *The Baptist Faith & Message*

Make as many photocopies as you need for study groups, church members, and worship attendees. Or download the PDFs at www.IBSA.org/B101.

Produced by the editors of the *Illinois Baptist*: Eric Reed, Meredith Flynn, Lisa Sergent. Designed by Kris Kell.

Look for B-101 in every issue!

COMING SOON Resources for B-101

- Leader's guides for study groups
- Self-guided tutorials on SBC missions, Baptist beliefs, distinctives, and the Cooperative Program
- The whole 20-part series will be available for download in time for fall discipleship classes and small groups.

Available soon online at www.IBSA.org/B101.



The call begins with "wherever"

Shirley Mackin started preparing for life as an international missionary long before she moved overseas. As a college student, she sensed God's call on her life and went to a missions conference to learn more. She committed to go wherever He would lead her, and joined a Bible study group with other students who felt a similar call.

When she went to graduate school for social work, "I remember telling people that I would eventually go overseas. I knew the Lord was calling me to go."

God had also called her husband, **Ross**, who knew he would serve overseas even before he met Shirley. The couple started preparing for their life in parts unknown, first by planting a Laotian church in Chicago so they could learn more about working with Asian people. Missionaries weren't allowed in Laos, a South Asian nation, at that time, so the Mackins requested that the Southern Baptist International Mission Board appoint them to neighboring Thailand, where the culture is similar.

"We thought we might be able to go to Laos later, but we have been in Thailand almost 28 years now," Shirley said. The nation of nearly 70 million people is largely Buddhist, and while Christians don't face physical persecution, there is overwhelming social pressure to follow Buddhism.

"Thai believers are often in situations where they are the only Christian and are pressured to follow the Buddhist traditions and culture of the country. Pray for continued boldness for these Thai believers."

Most of the Mackins' ministry has focused on church planting and evangelism. But they've used



We serve in ... Asia

Ross and Shirley Mackin were appointed as career missionaries to Thailand almost 28 years ago. The 70 million Thai people are part of the world's 4.3 billion Asians.

many different methods to share the Gospel over the years, like door-to-door evangelism in villages, distributing Gospel tracts, English lessons, medical and dental clinics, Christmas outreaches, radio broadcasts, and evangelistic outreaches in local schools.

They don't have to do it all on their own. Visiting volunteer teams have served alongside the Mackins in these ministries, and the couple currently is working with existing churches to plant new congregations.

"Pray for us to be faithful to God's call on our lives in penetrating the darkness that is all around us," Shirley said. "Pray for the blinders to be taken away and for Thai people to see the saving truth of the Gospel."

— Meredith Flynn

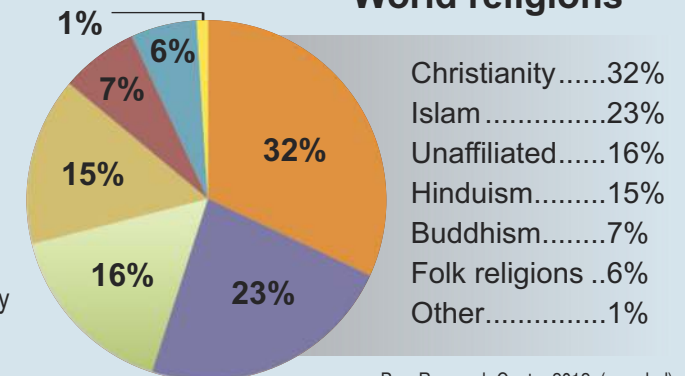
ONE GOD, ONE WAY

In a world with many religions all advocating many ways to know God, Christians contend there is only one God and only one way to know Him.

Central to the Hebrew faith is the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4-5): "God is one." This monotheistic declaration is in direct contrast to polytheism, which says there are many gods, and pantheism, which says everything is god.

Likewise, Jesus' statement "I am the way, the truth, and the life..." (John 14:6) is about one-ness. Jesus does not say he is "a" way. The Greek article translated "the" is very specific. There is only one. In declaring himself "the way," Jesus says plainly, "No one comes to the Father except through me."

World religions



— Pew Research Center 2012 (rounded)

WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT... **MAN**

Read Article 3 of *The Baptist Faith & Message (2000)* at www.IBSA.org/B101.

When we open the pages of the Bible, we gaze into a supernatural mirror that can tell us more about ourselves, and all of humankind, than any other source. We see our origin, our nature, our value and potential, and our destiny with and without God.

The Word of God shows us clearly who the human race is, has been, and will be, in the world and throughout history.

And yet it is personal. It penetrates and exposes our hearts and motives. It shows us ourselves, but with such searing truth and insight that we are often surprised. The Bible convinces us that its Author doesn't just know our ancestors, or human nature in a general way. He knows me, intimately.

But depending on the passage to which we open, we will see one of two very different reflections. Open the Bible to Genesis 1-2 or Psalm 1, and we will see a lofty, noble view of ourselves. We are made in God's image, in His likeness. We are the pinnacle of creation. We think, and reason, and feel. And we live not just in the moment, for survival, but with an awareness of the past and a hope for the future.

We also choose. The sun, moon and stars do not choose whether they will reflect the glory of their Creator. But we humans do, both every day and for eternity.

And so our second view of ourselves in the Bible is very different. Open to Genesis 3 or Psalm 51 or Romans 1 and we see our kind, and ourselves, after choosing sin. We look distorted, not because the

We are desperate and fallen, but also made in God's image.

mirror is flawed but because we, the objects, are flawed. We are selfish, and sin-sick.

In fact, in Noah's day, "...the Lord saw that man's wickedness was widespread on the earth and that every scheme his mind thought of was nothing but evil all the time." (Gen. 6:5, HCSB) This is by far the more common picture of humanity that we find in the Bible – tragically fallen, a shadow of our former selves and the way God created us.

No wonder the other things the Bible reveals about us – that we are male and female and that is good, that every person of every

race possesses dignity, that all human life is sacred – have been so distorted in our world.

But there are places in the Bible that we can clearly see both our desperate, fallen condition and our miraculous return to favor as the image bearers of God. Ephesians 2:1-3 tells us we were dead, selfish, hopeless, enslaved, trapped.

But then verse 4 simply, mercifully, begins, "But God..." And it goes on to tell us He is rich in mercy, and that He loves us, and that His grace was offered to us in Messiah Jesus on the cross. Now we can exercise that marvelous, God-like and God-given privilege of free will, and choose Jesus. Redemption and restoration into God's image and purpose await us.

What's the difference between the two very different pictures of humankind, and the two very different pictures of our own destiny, that we find in the pages in the Bible? In a word, it's grace. Every one of us, throughout history and around the world, begins as an eternal creature, made in God's image, but without Christ. It's what we do at that crossroads of grace that determines whether we will return to our Creator and live in His image, for His glory.

Nate Adams is executive director of the Illinois Baptist State Association.

CONSIDER THIS **For personal study or group discussion**

- 1 What evidences do you see in today's culture that people have distorted views of who they are?
- 2 When reading the Bible shows you your own humanity, your own self, what does it most often look like?
- 3 Which Bible passages encourage you most toward living in God's image for His pleasure? Which passages convict you most of your sinful nature?
- 4 In what specific ways do you long to look more like the image of God that we find in Christ?



Our denomination's statement of faith is called "The Baptist Faith & Message." It was updated in 2000 and adopted by elected messengers who attended the SBC's annual meeting that year. Adopting the BF&M is the voluntary choice of each local church.

See the **World**
from a *new angle*

SBC history
the **Southern Baptist Convention**

Year founded – **1845**

Stated purpose then:
"propagation of the Gospel"

What we call that now:
evangelism and missions

Members today:
16 million

Rank: **First** among U.S. Protestant denominations, second behind U.S. Catholics (75 million)

Early Southern Baptists were known for:
Bivocational farmer-preachers, mandatory moral conduct, plain living

Today Southern Baptists are known for:

(you fill in the blank)

Annual missions giving through the Cooperative Program: **\$188 million**

Half of the SBC's CP offerings go to international missions. The rest goes to North American missions, with tiny percentages funding the ERLC and seminary education for the next generation of pastors and missionaries.

CP WORKS!

– US Census data, Pew Research, shindigz.com.

WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT

STUFF WE'RE FOR

An old joke goes like this: A woman returned home after Sunday service. From his easy chair her husband asked, "What was the sermon about?"

"Sin," his wife replied. "What did the preacher say?" the man asked.

"He was against it."



First SBC President, William Bullein Johnson 1845



First African American SBC President, Fred Luter 2013

From the time of the Convention's founding in 1845, Southern Baptists have been known as people who are against sin. ("We don't drink, smoke, or chew, or go with girls who do," the saying goes.) Early Baptists were known for their circumspect, even austere lifestyle. They stuck to a strict moral code and tended to kick out members who strayed from the narrow way.

But we're also for a lot of important things. Among them are personal relationship with Jesus Christ (salvation), the duty to share our faith with people who don't know Christ (evangelism), and the call to carry the Gospel around the world (missions).

Baptists in the U.S. coalesced around the cause of missions through the Triennial Convention. They met every three years starting in 1814 in Philadelphia. Thirty years later Baptists in the South were in dispute with their Northern brethren over a variety of matters and decided to form their own denomination. Meeting in Augusta, Georgia, the Southern Baptist Convention was organized with 36,000 members.

Several strains of Baptists in the south had divergent views on doctrine and church polity, but they held a common commitment to Scriptural authority, personal salvation, baptism by immersion, evangelism and missions.

The new Southern Baptists established as little hierarchy

as possible in their new organization, calling it a "convention" rather than a denomination or Church with a capital "c." Each local church handles its own affairs, and "autonomy" is highly valued.

But working together through voluntary association, the SBC grew into a strong and effective missions organization. And in much of the nation, especially as evangelicals emerged after World War II, Southern Baptists became the main cultural force.

Back to the issue of sin: In recent years, Southern Baptists have admitted the role sin played in the denomination's founding. One factor in northern and southern Baptists parting ways was slavery. Northern Baptists had increasingly advocated abolition, while southern landowners wanted to keep their enslaved work force.

Frankly, the slavery motivation was news to some Baptists 150 years later, when a resolution was brought that we confess the sins of the past and repent of their lingering effects in the present. That was in 1995.

In 2013, Dr. Fred Luter of New Orleans became the first African American to be elected president of the SBC. "I never thought this day would come," an elderly white woman said tearfully to Luter after he preached at her Mississippi church, while squeezing his face affectionately between her palms, "but I'm so glad it did."

– Eric Reed