



A series from the *Illinois Baptist* • Vol. 2

BASICS FOR BAPTISTS

- WHO WE ARE
- WHAT WE BELIEVE
- HOW WE SERVE

Big, bustling, challenging, diverse

A woman came to Church of the Beloved in Chicago having never heard the Gospel.

“Six months later, she’s weeping during her baptism service,” says **David Choi**, the church planter who started COTB two years ago.

“I can’t even begin to explain the joy as a church planter, to know that somebody went all the way from never hearing about Jesus, to now being excited about the Gospel, and being converted, and knowing that her eternal destiny has been changed.

“There’s nothing like it.”

People are meeting Jesus at Church of the Beloved. What started as a core group of 20 people has grown to more than 400. Choi says 25 countries are represented on an average weekend at his church. And his diverse neighborhood is just a slice of metro Chicago, home to 10 million people.

“Obviously, we’re not going to, by ourselves, be able to make a huge dent in that,” Choi said. Enter ministry partners from Illinois and around the country, focused on penetrating spiritual lostness in Chicagoland.

The Send Chicago initiative started in 2012 as a way to funnel church planting resources into the city. The North American Mission Board (Southern Baptists’ domestic missions agency) partnered with the Illinois Baptist State Association and local leaders. Their plan is to connect potential church planters with Chicago neighborhoods in need of a new church.

Choi launched Church of the Beloved in February 2012. Fellow pastor Nathan Carter offered his church’s building to the new plant on Saturday evenings. The location, near the University of Illinois-Chicago, helped COTB reach out to international students.



We Serve in... Chicago

Church of the Beloved planter David Choi was surrounded by prayer partners at a city-wide prayer meeting for new churches.

The new church also received help from a ministry partner outside of Chicago – way outside. First Baptist Church in Fort Smith, Arkansas, supported COTB with prayer, financial resources, and mission teams. They also helped Choi’s church launch its second location in Streeterville, just a few blocks from Lake Michigan. COTB now has two Sunday morning services there, in addition to the Saturday evening gathering near UIC.

“We find ourselves grateful, impressed and challenged” by the partnership, said FBC Fort Smith’s missions pastor, **Greg Ford**. “We are grateful for how Dave initially poured into lay leaders and for their continued leadership and influence. We are impressed with their focus on evangelism and the favor they have seen with internationals.

“We are challenged by their commitment to prayer, and praise the Lord for how He has answered.”

– Meredith Flynn

TO JERUSALEM, AND BEYOND...

Buzz Lightyear wanted to go “to infinity...and beyond!” The animated astronaut said that a lot to his compatriots in Andy’s toy box.

To the disciples who followed Jesus, their leader’s final words before ascending into heaven must have sounded just as impossible. Jesus told them to go to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

He was describing a simple strategy for taking the Gospel to all the peoples of the world:



(1) **Start where you are**, whether it’s a crossroads community or a city. (2) **Go to the region** around your town. (3) **Go to a large adjacent territory** or unreached people group. (4) **Go to a distant place** where the Gospel has never been.

Let’s remember all four sectors when we plan missions strategies, supporting them financially and with our own personal hands-on endeavor.

Read: Article 2, Section A, of *The Baptist Faith & Message* (2000) at www.IBSA.org/B101

“Hello, God,” a kindergartener in our Sunday school once greeted me. I shouldn’t have been surprised. After all, we were in God’s house, and I would think this child expected to meet God there.

I know his mother, and many like him, hoped I would be a father figure. As a pastor for 50 years, in an African American church, I remember conversations from mothers who were heads of household that wanted me to speak to their children, especially their sons. For them I was a father figure.

I grew up in a single-parent household. My own understanding of the role a father should or must play was based on what I saw through the eyes of my friends. But even those whose fathers were present in their households did not hold the same opinions of fathers.

Even in my own home, if the question were asked of my daughters about me as their father their descriptions would vary. We all have different concepts of fathers.

As new believers, we often come to God with preconceptions of who He is based on our past experiences and our present needs.

In our new members class, we teach that God has attributes that both describe who He is and how

we can see Him in our life’s situations. There are several, but the four that resonate with many in our congregation are

- Jehovah-Raah
(The Lord my shepherd)
- Jehovah-Rapha
(The Lord that heals)
- Jehovah-Shammah
(The Lord is there), and
- Jehovah-Jireh
(The Lord will provide).

Early in our faith-walk, we relate to God at the point of our need. But it is important for all who accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior get to know God as Father.

Our statement of faith, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, is clear in defining who God is. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being who is Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. This statement would be similar to what other religious groups may ascribe to their god.

One may well ask the question, “What is the difference?”

The difference lies in the fact that the God we serve is not distant and unapproachable. Our God is very much an integral part of our everyday life. God is all-powerful, and all-knowing, yet we have the capability of developing an intimate relationship with Him.

According to the Holman Bible Dictionary, God relates to believers as a father relates to his child.

Some would translate Abba as “Daddy” to convey the close, personal meaning of the word. Even when the more formal New Testament word pater is translated “father,” the idea of Abba is certainly in the background.

Jesus addressed God as “Abba” in prayer (Mark 14:36) and taught His disciples to pray in the same terms (Luke 11:1-2). In Gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus uses this term some 65 times and over 100 times in John.

When Jesus talks about God as His Father, He is also describing God as our Father. God is the perfect example for what we wish all earthly fathers to be: holy, just, and fair, but above love, because God is love (1 John 4:8).

I have a friend who has two adopted children. There is no question that both he and his wife have poured into the lives of their children the kind of constant and consummate love that is so God-like. In that family, I see modeled the same way God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family, by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure (Ephesians 1:5).

Only a true Father could do that.
– Don Sharp is pastor of Faith Tabernacle Baptist Church in Chicago.

CONSIDER THIS

For personal study or group discussion



- 1** How do our preconceptions of fathers help or limit our understanding of God as our Father?
- 2** Can we expect to have the same kind of Father/child relationship with God as Jesus does? If so, how? If not, why?
- 3** What clues to the parent/child relationship do we get from the opening of the Lord’s Prayer: “Our Father”?
- 4** Do you identify with God in the “daddy” definition of “Abba”? Is that comfortable or uncomfortable to you?
- 5** How does our relationship to Father God change as we mature in our faith? Are we ever any less child-like in relation to Father God?

See the World from a *new angle*

Chicago is **HUGE!**

10
million
people



the **third largest** metro area in the US!

More than **2,000** people groups
speak **200** languages.

But **only 1 in 10** attend
an evangelical church on
any given Sunday.

Home of the **super-tall**
Sears Tower
(new sponsor name:
Willis Tower), and

Deep-dish pizza, and
Chicago-style hot dogs
(don't ask for ketchup).



Chicago is also one of **32 "Send cities"**
where Southern Baptists are focusing
our church planting efforts in North
America.

184 places and people groups
in Chicago's **77 neighborhoods** and **200 suburbs**
need a Bible-teaching church.

Through **Cooperative Program**
giving, we send church planters and
missionaries to share Christ with
people in the city.

When you give at church next Sunday,
every dollar touches the world.

CP WORKS!

WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT

'MISSIONAL' PEOPLE

Young **Adoniram Judson**
couldn't sleep. Staying at an
inn, he tossed and turned
as someone in the next
room made violent
noises all night. He
asked the desk clerk
what the ruckus was all
about. The guy in the
next room died. And
worse, it happened to be
Judson's best friend.



That shook Judson's faith,
and started him on a spiritual
journey, first to find that he
could trust God even when
bad things happen, then to
share that good news on the
opposite side of the world.

Several people had signifi-
cant roles in developing our
identity as a "missional" peo-
ple, long before the Southern
Baptist Convention was
founded in 1845.

There was missionary to the
Housatonic and Delaware
tribes **David Brainerd** of
Connecticut. The accounts of
his short life (he died in 1747
at age 29) inspired preachers
in a time when missions was
not popular. When **William
Carey** preached for foreign
missions, one man shouted,
"Young man, sit down; when
God pleases to convert the
heathen, he will do it without
your aid and mine." But Carey
preached on: "Expect great
things from God, attempt great
things for God!"

Next came Judson. He im-
pressed the Congregational
church's leaders that they
formed a missions board to
send him to Burma. On the
long sea voyage, Judson con-
ducted a study of baptism. He
concluded that believers in
Christ should make their own
choice to be baptized after
making their faith commit-
ment. So, when he arrived in

India on his way to Burma,
Judson asked an English Bap-
tist missionary to baptize him
and his wife.

Back home, Baptists took up
Judson's support and formed
their own missions organiza-
tion. They met every three
years, and so were called the
Triennial Convention.

Founded in 1814, this was a
forerunner to the Southern
Baptist Convention. As an as-
sociation, it set the pattern of
Baptists working together to
send out missionaries.

Judson served 37 years,
preaching and establishing
churches in Burma (now
called Myanmar). His transla-
tion of the Bible is still used
there today. He returned home
to America only once before
his death in 1850.

Most important, Judson be-
came inspiration for Baptists
for two centuries now, of a
man on a mission to share
Christ.

— Eric Reed

Think about it:

1. What do you think of the com-
ment made to William Carey by the
agitated church member?
2. Brainerd...Carey...Judson.
Who is in your line of people inspir-
ing your own "missional" interest?
3. How is being "missional" in our
everyday lives like and different
from being a missionary?
4. Why work together with other
Baptists to support missionaries?

ILLINOIS IN SIGHT

Taking it to the streets

Marketplace ministries reach people in the streets where they live. According to WMU.com, "When Jesus' disciples first heard the Acts 1:8 mandate that marked out their missions field as reaching from their front door to the farthest expanses of the globe, they may have seen the likelihood of impacting 'the ends of the earth' as being quite remote. Reaching those they rubbed shoulders with daily in the



marketplace was probably seen as a feasible goal."

Each February a group of Illinois Baptist women brave the Chicago cold to do marketplace ministry outside Uptown Baptist, standing at an intersection giving gifts of hats, scarves, gloves and socks (photo above).

In this neighborhood, among young people, professionals, and high-rise dwellers, also live people in desperate need.

"It really just opens my eyes [to needs] that I read about, but don't

ever see in my everyday life," said **Nanette Franks** of Dorrisville Baptist in Harrisburg.

In August, marketplace ministry moves to the Christian Activity Center (CAC) in East St. Louis where a team helps with its annual Back to School event. The CAC is a place of refuge for the nearly 700 kids who attend the center's after-school program on a regular basis.

Team members sort and price donated clothing and household items to be sold at a "yard sale" to raise funds for the center's ministries.

"Hope is often hard to find in the inner city. The CAC brings the hope of Jesus Christ and practical solutions to real life problems of children, teens, and their families," said **Rex Alexander**, IBSA's CAC liaison.

A new marketplace ministry began this year when Illinois women spent two days at an Arkansas prison ministering to and learning from inmates who have found true freedom in Christ.

Carmen Halsey, IBSA's missions involvement director, led the team. She hopes to take more teams to the Arkansas prison and to Illinois prisons. "Pray with me for open doors to our women's prisons in Illinois to allow Southern Baptist women to begin Bible studies with the inmates."

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 attenders.

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!**



mission illinois

Pray for a new church

Location: Edgewater and Elk Grove

Characteristics: There are more than 70,000 immigrants and students from Sub-Saharan Africa living in this area.

Prayer Needs: Pray for those who have immigrated to Edgewater and Elk Grove, and also for college students, that they will be befriended by believers in Christ.



— From the IBSA Church Planting Team

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.