

B4101

BASICS FOR BAPTISTS

● WHO WE ARE ● WHAT WE BELIEVE

● HOW WE SERVE

A series from the *Illinois Baptist* • Vol. 17

Taking the gospel ‘where Christ has not been named’

“This week we were able to prayer walk in a new subdivision,” missionaries Bryan and Deana Wolf reported in a recent prayer e-mail.

“This area, ‘Nueva Hacienda’ does not have any churches. Please pray that the Lord will guide us to a person of peace and that He will grant us wisdom as we seek to plant a new church in this area.”

The Wolfs, both from Central Illinois, have served 10 years in Chile with the International Mission Board. As connectors, they not only seek to start new churches and strengthen existing congregations, they also serve as liaisons to U.S. churches who want to be part of seeing the gospel spread in Chile.

According to the most recent Global Status of Evangelical Christianity report, the country has seven people groups that are unreached, meaning the population is less than 2% evangelical. They fall all across the demographic spectrum: deaf people, Russians, and Mandarin-speakers, among others. Five of the groups are also unengaged, meaning there is no evangelical church planting strategy at work to reach them. Across South America, there are 121 unreached, unengaged people groups.

Like the U.S., Chile also is facing an increase of



We serve in ... South America

The red dots represent 121 unreached, unengaged people groups in South America; five are in Chile, where Bryan and Deana Wolf serve.

“nones”—people with no religious affiliation. A poll by the country’s Pontifical Catholic University and Adimark showed the number of people who identify as atheist or having no religion rose from 12% in 2006 to 22% in 2014. Pew Research reported a similar finding across Latin America: 4% of adults surveyed were raised with no religious affiliation, and 8% now report none.

For the Wolfs in Chile, partnership is key—both with local churches and congregations outside the country. They recently worked with a local church to host a community outreach event followed by three days of Vacation Bible School. “Please pray that the gospel of Jesus Christ will be clearly presented in word and in deed,” the Wolfs asked prayer partners in an e-mail before the event.

In the same update, they asked for intercession for other churches led toward possible ministry in Chile.

“Please pray for two U.S. churches who are seeking the Lord’s will about partnering with a Chilean church to plant new churches in unreached areas of northern Chile. Please pray that God will burden churches to take the gospel where Christ has not yet been named...”

– Meredith Flynn

‘RENDER UNTO CAESAR’

People of faith have struggled with the morality of obedience to the government since before the time of Jesus. The Pharisees were trying to trap Jesus when they asked, “Should we pay taxes?” but his reply to their question frames our theology about the government even today: It is possible to honor the rules of the nation and to keep reserved to God what is his.

While our American culture is not to be equated with God’s kingdom, Baptists have historically sought “to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love,” as described in *The Baptist Faith & Message (2000)*. The separation of church and state, intended to assure freedom of religion, doesn’t prohibit Christian influence; appropriate participation, obedience so long as it is moral and ethical, enhances our influence.



WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT... THE SOCIAL ORDER

Read Article 15 of *The Baptist Faith & Message (2000)*, “The Christian and the Social Order,” at IBSA.org/B101.

How is the church to engage the culture and society? This tension has existed throughout church history. In both his Gospel and Epistles, John the Apostle warns of being in the world, but not adopting its values. The early church father Tertullian strongly advocated that Christians should not participate in the world’s affairs, such as philosophy, the military or even politics, because they are inherently evil and heretical. He wrote, “What has Jerusalem to do with Athens...?” demonstrating the conflict between faith and philosophy.¹

During the Reformation era, Martin Luther recognized the tension that Christians experienced as servants of Christ in a society that was created to be good, but was corrupted by sin. Thus, he called upon believers to embrace the good in culture, to reject that which was corrupted, and to remain obedient to God. However, he realized that living this way was both “tragic and joyful. . . [with] no solution of the dilemma this side of death.”²

The Baptist Faith & Message exhorts Christians to impact society with an incarnational presence that seeks transformational change through the power of the Holy Spirit.

1. Hugh T. Kerr, “Readings in Christian Thought”
2. Richard Neibuhr, “Christ and Culture”

A call to holiness

The pursuit of holiness is twofold. First, it requires new spiritual life. This is being born again or regenerated “by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ.” If the church is to make an eternal difference for the kingdom of God, its members should be regenerate ones.

Second, as disciples of Christ, believers are charged to be “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:13-14). Christians have a biblical responsibility to lead transformational change under the power and leadership of the Holy Spirit through political and social interaction.

As salt, the church is to have a purifying effect by standing firm for truth and biblical authority. As light, the church is to minister and shine in the midst of darkness by speaking and serving compassionately and proclaiming the truth and love of Jesus Christ to those that are downtrodden, hopeless, oppressed, and defenseless.

A call to action

The call to action is multifaceted. It begins with opposition to evil, wicked and immoral behavior, such as racism, greed and sexual immorality. Relying upon the Holy Spirit, the church should exemplify racial reconciliation beginning with heartfelt repentance; practice sacrificial giving; and demonstrate and promote sexual purity and fidelity, especially through the God-ordained relationship called marriage which is between one man and one woman.

Furthermore, the church is to provide ministry or services that assist those in need. Churches do this locally, and through community, state or national associations.

Illinois Baptists make a difference in our society through the work of Baptist Children’s Home and Family Services, which provides an array of services aimed at the preservation of life and strengthening families.

Another way Illinois Baptists minister to a hurting world is through Disaster Relief responses. These are examples of how the church can serve people in need and how doors may be opened for the spread of the gospel.

Finally, Christians are to extol and practice godly virtues in business and governmental affairs. Being the salt of the earth means seasoning the world with the righteousness of Christ in all areas of life. Christians should be the epitome of ethical businessmen, exemplary employees, and virtuous public servants.

A call to cooperation

The BF&M emphasizes partnerships with people and organizations to accomplish societal good. The challenge for the church is cooperating without compromising her identity in Christ. The church should carefully consider such partnerships according to biblical principles, lest it openly or tacitly endorse a position contrary to Scripture.

Kevin Carrothers is an attorney and pastor of Rochester FBC.

CONSIDER THIS

For personal study or group discussion



- 1 What does it mean to be “salt” and “light”? Identify specific ministries in which your church is currently engaged.
- 2 Are there other issues in your community that seem unaddressed, or other aspects of public life that your church could engage?
- 3 Name some organizations or agencies that the church could partner with for the benefit of the community. What would be some benefits and some challenges of such a cooperative effort?

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.

The Unborn

Every day **3,300** women wake up with an unplanned pregnancy.

Since the Roe v. Wade ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court legalizing abortion in 1973,

57.6 million

unborn babies have been aborted.



CHOOSE LIFE

According to Operation Rescue, half of all pregnancies in the U.S. are unintended. Of those, **4 in 10 are terminated.**

There are approximately

1.2 million

abortions in the U.S. every year.

By age 45, at least

one-third

of American women will have had at least one abortion.



Pregnancy Resource Centers, an alternative to abortion advocates and providers, assists **6,500 people** daily with pregnancy and sex-related issues.

1,000 PRCs offered **230,000** free ultrasounds to pregnant women considering abortion in 2010, to allow them to see their unborn babies.

As a result, many choose life for their children.

still - From Operation Rescue and the SBC's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission.

CP WORKS



WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT

LIFE IS PRECIOUS

One Sunday in mid-January, a church in Central Illinois took a break from their study of 1 Peter. Their focus that particular day was "the sanctity of human life." Many Southern Baptist congregations observe "Sanctity of Human Life Sunday" at the beginning of the year, as a way to remember how life issues affect the culture and the ministry of churches.

The sanctity of human life encompasses more than abortion and rights of the unborn, but that has been a primary focus for Baptists, at least since a shift in the late 1970s. Three years before Roe v. Wade, though, a majority of Baptists supported abortion rights in some cases.

"In 1970," Baptist Press reported recently, "a poll conducted by the Baptist Sunday School Board found that 70 percent of Southern Baptist pastors supported abortion to protect the mental or physical health of the mother, 64 percent supported abortion in cases of fetal deformity and 71 percent in cases of rape."

Future Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis (right) recalled seeing an ad in the St. Louis newspaper that listed the SBC as one of the denominations that supported abortion rights. "Right there beside the Unitarians and universalists was the Southern Baptist Convention," Lewis told Baptist Press about the 1979 ad.

"... That bothered me a lot."

To help lead the SBC back toward a biblical position on life, Lewis proposed at the 1980 Southern Baptist Convention the first of many pro-life resolutions. Later, as president of HMB (now the North American Mission Board), he established a department to help churches create crisis pregnancy centers.

Another leader in the struggle to bring Baptists back to a biblical position on life was Richard Land. He would later lead the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, the entity charged with informing Baptists about public policy and working to shape that policy from offices in Washington, D.C., and Nashville, Tenn.



Today, Baptist churches continue to exhibit the sanctity of life in their communities. A bulletin insert produced by the ERLC told the story of a church in Tallahassee, Fla., that gave money to a pregnancy center to provide for ultrasound machines. In just six months, 120 women received ultrasounds at the center, 53 of whom were abortion-minded at the time. Thirty-five of the mothers-to-be chose life for their babies.

"It is mind blowing to see how many women chose life because of the ultrasound experience," said City Church pastor Dean Inserra. "It is a game changer...when you see the baby, you see it's a life."

- With reporting by Baptist Press, ERLC

Think about it:

1. In our culture, what evidence do you see that life often isn't viewed as precious?
2. What ministries in your community help mothers-to-be who are making difficult decisions? How can your church support them?

ILLINOIS IN SIGHT

Power of the Press

It's rare that an organization's flagship publication pre-dates the organization itself. But in the case of the *Illinois Baptist*, Baptists in the state were reading the newspaper more than a year before IBSA was founded.

Seasoned Baptist publisher William P. Throgmorton founded the paper in 1905, while also serving as pastor of First Baptist Church in Marion. He soon resigned his post at the church to give his full attention to the paper, Myron Dillow notes in his history of Illinois Baptists.

Throgmorton would need the extra time. He used the paper to campaign for a clear definition of what it meant to be Baptist, and later for IBSA's founding, trumpeted in the Feb. 9, 1907, issue.

"PINCKNEYVILLE MEETING EXPECTATIONS REALIZED," read that headline. The paper described IBSA's organizing meeting as "an immense and enthusiastic gathering of Baptists."

Throgmorton helmed the *IB* until 1927. For him, the paper was a way "not only to reflect Baptist life but to mold and shape it," Dillow wrote in "Harvesttime on the Prairie." The editors that followed him "were less passionate in pro-

moting their particular brand of Baptist theology and gave more copy to promoting and assisting the churches in their work."

Today, the *Illinois Baptist* is a mix of local and national news, church success stories, ministry trends, how-to's, opinion pieces, and coverage of government and

culture issues that affect how Christians live out the gospel in our world. The iB2news blog launched in 2012 to communicate breaking news between issues of the paper, which is delivered every three weeks.

In the past several years, IBSA's communications strategy has expanded to include new print pieces, like bimonthly bulletin inserts focused on cooperative missions giving, and *Resource* magazine, a seasonal planning guide for churches. And as the way people get and read news changes, so have IBSA's online media offerings, which now include Facebook and Twitter pages, a Vimeo video page, and the weekly eConnection newsletter.

A new communication piece for leaders, iLead, will launch in 2015. For information about these resources and to subscribe, go to IBSA.org/communications or e-mail Communications@IBSA.org.



The *Illinois Baptist* then (Jan. 6, 1950) and now

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: Quad Cities

Focus: Hispanic people group

Characteristics: The Quad Cities area functions as one city but actually comprises five, with a population of about 272,000. These communities have a significant segment of Spanish-speaking people.

Pray: For health and growth for the Quad Cities Baptist churches, and for individuals to serve on a church planting mission team for the region.

— From the IBSA Church Planting Team



What are you doing on Wednesday nights?

This is the 17th in our 20-part series. That means more than half the essays on *The Baptist Faith & Message* are ready for use in a new members class, small group, or doctrine study. Look online and download the set. We've bundled them for easy printing and distribution.

By the way: If you need copies of *The BF&M (2000)*, they can be downloaded too, or IBSA will provide them for your new study group.

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