

Making a French Connection



A mission trip to Paris first piqued **Joyce Diesman's** interest because she knew she could speak the language. The one-time French teacher was meeting with women's ministry leaders in Springfield several years ago when she heard about an opportunity to work with a missionary in Paris who was using French-language classes to reach out to Muslim women.

"I didn't know God would give me a heart for Muslim people," said Diesman, a member of Brainerd Avenue Baptist Church in Countryside, Ill.

France has the largest Muslim population in the European Union at 6.5 million, according to the Gatestone Institute. Most emigrants from "N.A.M.E." countries – an abbreviation the International Mission Board uses for North Africa and the Middle East. Diesman read up on Muslim culture before her first trip and "was really praying hard the Lord would help us to minister to them. When our prayer," she said.

Muslims in France "are not finding everything they want." They're drawn to the English classes as a way to better themselves and learn the most widely spoken language in the world.

In April 2014, Diesman went on her sixth trip to France, now as a team leader. She took three volunteers with her.

For more information about missions opportunities call (217) 391-3138, or www.IBSA.org/Missions.



Pray for a new church

Location: Norwood Park, Chicago

Target: Anglo and multi-ethnic individuals and families

Characteristics: Known for its parks and other green spaces, the Norwood Park neighborhood also is home to many city employees.

employees.

Pray: That firefighters, police officers and other city workers here would hear the Gospel, and for leaders to plant a new congregation in this community.



– 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.

B-101
BASICS FOR BAPTISTS

● WHO WE ARE ● WHAT WE BELIEVE ● HOW WE SERVE

A series from the *Illinois Baptist* • Vol. 7

Christians accept risks in closed countries



We serve among ... persecuted people

Christian workers rely on relationship-building to open doors to the Gospel in Muslim countries.

Her friends working in other parts of the world saw hundreds of people come to Christ in one day, the worker said. That didn't happen in her country. For the Muslims she met, "relationships are so important, and they have heard so much about the Christian faith, that they have all sorts of questions for you."

Those questions, she said laughing, can be "off the wall." But the relationship-building process is integral in earning the right to be heard.

"We had so many people tell us, 'You're not what we were like,'" she said.

"It takes so much time to be able to break down all of the barriers, and for them to finally be able to trust you, and to be able to trust the things you say."

– Meredith Flynn

Judaism, Islam, and Christianity are called the "Abrahamic religions." Over half (54%) of the world's population claims connection to a common ancestor, Abraham. These religions are monotheistic – believing there is only one God – although they have different understandings of who that God is and how he manifests himself. Interfaith discussions may start with Father Abraham, but when the talk turns to Jesus, the religions hold divergent views. Jews see Jesus as a rabbi who teaches biblical truths to his followers. Muslims see Jesus as a prophet of Islam, sort of like Mohammed.

Neither religion recognizes **Jesus** as the **Son of God**. Nor would they consider Christianity to be monotheistic. They say Christians worship three gods in the Trinity, and thereby commit the heresy of giving God a partner (*shirk* in Islam and *shituf* in Judaism). Muslims and Jews who revere Abraham have yet to accept his descendant Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah. Their stumbling block: the "Trifune God" is not an oxymoron, but a wonderful paradox.

STARTING POINTS



WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT... GRACE

Read Article 5 of *The Baptist Faith & Message (2000)* at www.IBSA.org/B101.

My wife and I recently returned from a two-month stay in Uganda where we met and welcomed two new children into our family.

As our children grow older, they are going to want know more about the adoption process from our perspective. At some point, it will dawn on them that Mommy and Daddy made a choice to fly to Africa to adopt them into our family. We *chose* them. We chose *them* specifically. Of the millions of orphans around the world, we chose them, in obedience to God's calling.

When they realize this, they are going to want to know more about that choice. They may not fully grasp the choice, but the more they grasp of it, the more they will cherish the thought. At least that is our hope.

Something similar happens for the Christian. We too have been adopted into God's family. God is our Father. And while the details may not make much sense to us at first, and it may even feel like the choices were all made from our own initiative, as we mature through interaction with our Father and His Word, we begin to realize that He chose us.

Through no initiative of our own, He chose us.

Apart from anything we could have offered, He chose us. Before we even understood the meaning

of the word "choice," He chose us.

It's difficult to articulate the flood of worship-inspiring emotions that you'll experience, once that thought takes root in your soul. And chances are, you are going to want to know more about that divine choice.



God's choice to save a sinner, in theology, is known as the doctrine of election. To be "elect" means to be "chosen." It's a doctrine that many *choose* (pardon the pun) to avoid, but we shouldn't because it highlights God's grace. It is fitting, therefore, that the fifth article of *The Baptist Faith and Message*, which articulates "God's Purpose of Grace," begins with the words, "Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners."

Our salvation is all of grace and our salvation begins with the gracious choice of God. It grieves me (and I suspect the Lord as well) that the doctrine of election has been the source of so much division and discouragement among

Christians. Yet, whenever Scripture raises the matter it is always meant to encourage the Church.

Take, for example, the opening of 1 Peter. In this letter, Peter was writing to Christians who were suffering tremendously. He wrote to encourage them. To that end, he went to great lengths to remind them of their Christian identity. Knowing who we are in Christ helps us to persevere through adversity. Peter understood this. Notice the first word he uses to describe these suffering Christians – "to God's elect..." (1 Peter 1:1).

Friends, this is not by accident. Peter knew that the doctrine of election could encourage and sustain suffering Christians while grounding their entire salvation in God's grace. For this reason he invites them (and us) to worship in words reminiscent of the rest of the *BF&M's* fifth article:

"To the elect... praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time..." (1 Peter 1:1-5).

Brandon Holiski served as pastor of First Baptist Church of Bolingbrook.

CONSIDER THIS For personal study or group discussion

- 1 When you think of the doctrine of election, what comes to mind? How do you feel knowing that God chose you?
- 2 When you read *BF&M's* fifth article, are there theological words you don't understand? If so, do the Scripture references provided help clarify those words for you? Do you see why each of these words conveys something about God's grace to us?
- 3 How many elements of this article can you detect in the words of 1 Peter 1:1-12?



Birthplace of Christ Death of Christianity

Since the first Gulf War, the religious composition of **North Africa** and the **Middle East** has changed rapidly. The birthplace of Christianity now has the smallest regional Christian minority in the world.



"The religious ecology of the Middle East looks more fragile than ever, as the Arab Spring gives way to Christian Winter."

– Quote from *The London Guardian*, stats from *Int'l Day of Prayer (idop.org)*

Religious harrasment reaches six-year high.

Jews harassed in 95 countries

Muslims in 135 countries

Christians in 151 countries.

– Pew Research

300 people are killed every day for following Jesus, according to Crusade for Christ.

Mark your calendar:
First Sunday of November
International Day of Prayer
for the Persecuted Church



492 people groups have no access to major evangelical print, audio, visual, or human resources. Southern Baptist missionaries call them "The Last Frontier." – IMB

Your Sunday offering supports the Cooperative Program and missionaries in these countries.

WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT

WORLD'S LARGEST MISSIONS FORCE

There's an unusual clock you can download at the website of the International Mission Board. It's not a time clock with minutes and hours. It's a population clock with lots of numbers, updated every second. The clock is a reminder that the world's population of over 7 billion grows by more than 200,000 each day. And more than 4 billion of those people do not know Jesus as Savior.

It's a sobering reminder of the herculean task facing Southern Baptists and our 4,800 international missionaries. The clock is a good representation of the urgency we've felt about world missions for almost two centuries.

For its first hundred years, the Foreign Mission Board (IMB's original name) struggled to keep a small team on the field. Founded in 1845, when Baptists in the south separated from northern Baptists over appointment of slave owners as missionaries, the Board was, at first, well-funded by prosperous landowners. But the Southern economy tanked after the Civil War, and giving to missions suffered.

Even our most famous missionary, Lottie Moon, often pleaded with churches back home to dig deeper and support work such as hers in China.

"I wonder how many of us really believe that it is more blessed to give than to receive," Moon wrote in a famous letter calling for regular giving to missions. Much support of missionaries was done by fundraising events. These "entertainments and gimmicks" were repugnant to Miss Moon, according to biographer Catherine Allen.

"A woman who accepts that statement of our Lord Jesus



Christ as a fact...will lay aside sacredly not less than one-tenth of her income or her earnings as the Lord's money," Moon wrote, "which she would no more dare to touch for personal use than she would steal."

With the establishment of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering in 1888 and the Cooperative Program in 1925, the Board had more reliable funding. By 1955 Southern Baptists put 1,000 international missionaries on the field, and the call went out for more. By 1980, 3,000 missionaries were stationed around the globe. The number peaked at just over 5,000 in 2009. Presently, IMB leaders say there are more candidates for career missions service than the Board can support.

– Eric Reed

Think about it:

Think about your finances. What do you support systematically? What do you support sporadically? What does that say about your priorities?

Ask the same questions about your church finances. Based on the budget, what's important?

Look up some Bible verses about missions. How does God feel about lost people?

Do you know any missionaries personally? Check the prayer calendar at www.IBM.org. Make a plan to pray for them.