

**Mission Illinois Offering & Week of Prayer**  
**Adult mission study**  
**Now More Than Ever**

**Before the study:**

Check the church office for the promotion kit for the **Mission Illinois Offering & Week of Prayer**. Also visit [missionillinois.org](http://missionillinois.org) for additional study materials and videos.

Before the study begins, have an MIO table set up where people can stop and browse the 2017 materials if they haven't already:

- Prayer guide/bulletin insert
- Newspaper study guide
- Copies of the 2017 MIO stories from the Illinois Baptist
- Offering envelopes
- Illinois map

**Opening Discussion:**

Read Romans 10:14 aloud to the group, then talk about the following questions:

*“How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher?” (CSB)*

1. Think back to when you first put your faith in Jesus Christ. How did that happen? Who was the “preacher” who helped you hear and understand the gospel?
2. How would your life have turned out differently if that person or people never told you about Jesus?
3. In your MIO materials, locate the blue map of Illinois. Find your county. Are there many SBC churches located there? Now, ask someone in the group to look up the population of your town or county. Of those people,  $\frac{2}{3}$  of them are spiritually lost.

Think about that for a minute: approximately 65% of the people around you have yet to have someone reach out and tell them how they can have a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. As you begin this study, remember Romans 10:14. And start thinking about people in your community need to hear the good news.

**Topic: Being a bold witness**

**Did you know...**

- In many parts of Illinois, Baptists are outnumbered by Muslims, Mormons, eastern religions, and people with no faith at all.
- At least 8 million of our 13 million neighbors in Illinois do not know Jesus Christ.
- Among many other things, giving to the Mission Illinois Offering will help allow over 200 churches to be trained in evangelism this year.
- Your gift will allow more than 100 pastors to be mentored through the Pastor's Evangelism Network, and help other IBSA missionaries continue in their work to grow and strengthen churches across the state.

**Watch:** "[Sharing Jesus-everywhere](#)" video (3:54) or read the summary below, answering the corresponding discussion questions.

**Summary:** Pat Pajak leads evangelism training for IBSA, igniting congregations across the state and helping more churches share their faith with more people in Illinois. In 2016, Pat suffered a heart attack. After going through quadruple open heart surgery, his doctor ordered 36 sessions of cardio rehab.

"I believe in witnessing opportunities wherever you're at," said Pajak, including the ICU and later the cardiac rehab unit. He thanked his three rehab nurses by giving them each a Bible. And through the relationship he built with them over the weeks, he was able to ask them about their relationship with Christ. One nurse in particular, Gina, was very open with Pat and said she had never trusted Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior of her life. Pat then had the opportunity to share the gospel with her and to help guide Gina as she prayed to accept Jesus into her heart.

"She hugged me and said 'I love you,'" Pat tearfully explained. He went on to say that although Gina started as a complete stranger, building a relationship with her gave him the privilege of being able to pray with her.

Overall, Pat had the opportunity to lead eight nurses to Christ during his hospital stay. "So the easiest way, I think, to impact lostness in Illinois," he said, "is to be able to build that relationship and friendship with people, where they begin to trust you." Sharing Christ with others is not just for your pastor to do, it's for every church member, he said.

"Now is the opportunity. Now is the moment. And we just need to capture that."

**Discuss:**

1. What part of Pat's story was most convicting for you? How will this conviction influence how you approach evangelism from now on?
2. When faced with huge medical problems, Pat was still totally focused on telling others about Jesus. When faced with problems in your own life, what is typically your focus? Have you been more concerned with yourself or with using your circumstances to point others to Jesus?
3. Make a list of three people who you can start intentionally building a relationship with, with the goal of sharing the gospel with them.

## Topic: Need in the Northwest

### Did you know...

- In Illinois, the greatest need for more churches is in the northwest region.
- In the Quad Cities, 42% of people have no church background at all, and 75% do not know Jesus as savior.
- Of the 102 counties in our state, 10 don't have a single evangelical church, many of them in the northwest corner.
- 12 more counties in Illinois only have one SBC church.

**Watch:** ["Spiritual need in the Northwest"](#) video (3:18) or read the summary below, answering the corresponding discussion questions.

**Summary:** Geographically, the northwest region of Illinois is very large. At one point it was a booming area, said John Mattingly, IBSA's Director for Church Planting in the northwest. But multiple closed factory buildings are evidence of how much the northwest has changed.

This region is not just in need of economic revitalization, though. With multiple counties lacking an SBC presence, the northwest is in need of spiritual transformation as well. "People in northwest Illinois, they deserve every opportunity to hear the good news of Jesus, just like somewhere on the other side of the globe does," said Van Kicklighter, Associate Executive Director of IBSA's Church Planting Team.

John Mattingly, one of eight IBSA church planting catalysts, and his wife Jacki have focused their ministry on this largely rural area, because they feel God has planted them there for a reason.

"If we're going to reach northwest Illinois," Mattingly explained, "I really believe that we're going to have to develop an appetite for risk. Risk means that we don't know what's going to happen, which I believe makes us a frontier area." Although John already works with more than 80 church planters, many more are still needed. "Our communities are open to the gospel of Jesus Christ," he said. "All we need is some people who would come and take some risk."

Established congregations are also needed to support and walk alongside new church plants. New churches tend to be more effective in leading unreached people to faith, said John. "We need churches that will partner with these men and women who are taking the risk."

### Discuss:

1. Before this study, were you aware of the desperate need for the gospel in northwest Illinois? What are your thoughts now after being informed of the need there?
2. Why do you think John said that becoming a church planter in this region was a risk?

3. Make a list of ways your own congregation could possibly come alongside and support a church plant in the northwest. Pray about whether or not God is sending your family to go and take the risk, becoming a church planter in this spiritually desolate area.

## **Concluding thoughts and prayers**

As you close your time in prayer, consider the following questions:

Do I have a sense of urgency when it comes to sharing the gospel with others? Do we as a church prioritize evangelism and reaching out to those who are lost? In what ways can I personally be a stronger witness? How can we as a congregation better evangelize and reach out to our community?

Ask someone in the group read Romans 10:14 aloud once more. Have volunteers each take a section of the verse to pray over Illinois:

- For the Holy Spirit to open hearts to believe
- For the gospel to be shared
- For church planters
- For gospel witnesses to respond to the call to missions and evangelism in Illinois

Using the printed MIO prayer guide or the Daily Devotions in the *Illinois Baptist* newspaper or online, pray:

- For lostness in the Northwest quadrant of our state
- That the next generation would be reached with the gospel
- For Chicago and church planting efforts happening there
- For more soul-winning churches in Illinois
- For stronger churches through leadership development and coaching
- That churches would be effective in their local compassion ministry efforts
- For Illinois Baptist missions mobilization across the state
- That people would generously give to the Mission Illinois Offering so that we reach the \$475,000 goal.

For additional materials for study and prayer, visit [missionillinois.org](http://missionillinois.org).