

Mission Illinois Offering & Week of Prayer 2018
Adult Mission Study
Illinois Needs You Now

Before the study:

Check the church office for the Mission Illinois Offering & Week of Prayer promotion kit. Also, visit missionillinois.org for additional study materials and videos.

Before the study begins, have a table set up where people can stop and browse the 2018 MIO materials if they haven't already:

- Prayer guide/bulletin insert
- Planning guide from July 16 *Illinois Baptist*
- Copies of the 2018 MIO stories from the *Illinois Baptist*
- Offering envelopes
- Illinois map

Topic: IBSA was There

Opening discussion

Read 1 Timothy 4:6-16 aloud to the group. *"Until I come, give your attention to public reading, exhortation, and teaching. Don't neglect the gift that is in you..."* 1 Timothy 6:13-14a (CSB).

Discuss the following questions:

1. Paul directs Timothy to focus on "public reading, exhortation, and teaching." In our church, how do we encourage our church staff?
2. How are we meeting the needs of our community? What more could we do if we utilized the support of our local association and/or the Illinois Baptist State Association?
3. In your MIO materials, locate the blue map of Illinois. Find your county. Are very many SBC churches located there? Now, ask someone in the group to look up the population of your town or county. Of those people, 2/3 of them are spiritually lost.

Think about that for a minute: About 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 what we are called to in 1 Timothy. How can we be good servants within our regional and state associations? How can we make use of the resources provided there, so that more people in our communities might hear the gospel?

Did you know...

- Many churches have a single staff position: pastor. This can be very isolating for the overseer of a church.
- Pastors need support—from more than their congregation. Each Southern Baptist church is part of a local association of churches that can partner with them when dealing with day-to-day issues.
- The Illinois Baptist State Association is a ministry partner with almost 1,000 churches statewide, providing leadership training and resources where they are needed.

Watch: “IBSA was There” or read the summary below, answering the corresponding discussion questions at the end. The full print version of this article is posted at missionillinois.org.

Summary: “Even at my weakest moments, IBSA was there,” said **Bermayne Jackson**, pastor of Calvary East St. Louis.

Larry Rhodes, an IBSA zone consultant, reaches out to churches like Jackson’s in Metro East St. Louis as a partner and friend. Last summer, he brought a VBS kit to Jackson as a gift, resulting in the first Vacation Bible School the young church had ever done. Rhodes’s contribution, along with that of other IBSA zone consultants, shows pastors and churches across Illinois that they can “make an impact, we can change lives, and it doesn’t take 100, 200, or 300 people to do it,” according to Jackson.

In each of the state’s 10 zones, IBSA zone consultants help pastors and churches by providing resources and training, and sometimes by serving as a listening ear. For Charis Baptist Fellowship, Rhodes walked with Pastor **Jason Vinson** as the church rebooted. “IBSA was there when we really needed partners...” Vinson said, “So there’s an expectation, there’s a joy, there’s an excitement, there’s a confidence that God’s at work in this place and has not abandoned us.”

Rhodes also helped Calvary Baptist in Alton with evangelism training and a new direction for their worship ministry. “If you were to come to me today and ask me, ‘Do you know what number the zone is that you live in?’ I’m not sure I could give that answer,” said Pastor **Andre Dobson**, “But I know the guy....And when I think about our church transitioning or having needs, because Larry Rhodes was there, IBSA was there.”

Your Mission Illinois Offering makes the ministry of IBSA zone consultants possible.

Rhodes said it best: “We’re here to serve the churches, that’s why we’re here. We’re here to help them, and we’re here because of them. And...we appreciate them being there for us.”

Discuss:

1. Before this study, were you aware of the work of IBSA zone consultants? What are your thoughts now on the support IBSA offers through their work?
2. Do you know who your zone consultant is? If not, find the latest *Resource* magazine in your church office or go online to IBSA.org/resource-magazine to find who is listed for your area. Pray for him and his ministry in your zone.
3. Consider how your church could utilize the help of IBSA’s zone consultants. Make a list of needs your church will have within the next six months. Consider your church growth, your Sunday school options, your teaching materials, your outreach problems, and last but not least, consider what your pastor needs—in what areas could he use more support? Feel free to reach out to your zone consultant to ask for his input on meeting those needs. Repeat this needs assessment within the next year or two.

Topic: Partners for Illinois

Opening discussion:

Read Acts 8:26-40. “*Philip...said, ‘Do you understand what you’re reading?’ ‘How can I,’ he said, ‘unless someone guides me?’*” (Acts 8:30b-31a).

Discuss the following questions:

1. Reading aloud was common at this time, especially if the scroll was not written in the reader's native language, so we can deduce that the Ethiopian eunuch was trying to understand the Old Testament passage about Jesus without much understanding of the original Greek. Consider who, then, is in our neighborhood, town, or county that needs to understand Jesus in their own language.
2. Perhaps your community is filled with people who speak English and share other common ground with the people in your church. How can your church support others who are sharing Jesus across cultural boundaries?

Did you know...

-Many people in Illinois do not think of Illinois as a mission field.

-But Illinois has at least 8 million people out of 13 million that don't claim to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

-Read Acts 1:8. Illinois is our Judea.

Watch: "Partners for Illinois" or read the summary below; then answer the corresponding discussion questions. The full print version of this roundtable discussion is available at missionillinois.org.

Summary: Four IBSA pastors and ministry leaders met up to answer the question: What can our churches do together that they could never accomplish alone?

Adron Robinson, IBSA president, said cooperation with IBSA "gives the local church the resources and the connections to do statewide ministry that we can never, never accomplish as one small local congregation. Through Disaster Relief, evangelism trainings, [and] equipping of the local church body through IBSA staff, we are able to reach people all around the state."

Speaking about his church, Hillcrest Baptist in Country Club Hills, Robinson said, "We were able to see the money that we invested going to reach lost people in Illinois—going to help us reach our Judea, you know. Hillcrest can't reach the entire state, but by giving through the Mission Illinois Offering, we can help other Illinois Baptists reach other lost people in their areas."

Mark Emerson, associate executive director of IBSA's Church Resources Team, took it one step further. "One of the main things we do at IBSA is develop leaders," he said. Emerson explained that as a young pastor and church planter, he would look at various ways his church functioned and the way his town functioned, and then blame their congregational issues on the latter.

"What I learned," he clarified, "is that our ministry really had a leadership problem. And if the church was going to grow, I was going to have to grow." Today, Emerson hopes that every Illinois Baptist pastor can have the kinds of connections that helped him grow. To follow through with that idea, Emerson helps create cohorts where leaders come together and learn to lead. IBSA has about 40 cohorts now.

John Yi, 2nd generation church planting catalyst for the northeast region of Illinois, explained, "In Chicago we see so much diversity—people from all over the world speaking all kinds of different languages....The challenge is two-fold—that we reach immigrants in their own language, but also reach their children with the gospel in English, which the parents are unfamiliar with, in a meaningful way that's going to bring them to Christ."

Illinois is very much a mission field, said IBSA Executive Director **Nate Adams**, where there are many people who have never heard the gospel in a way they can really understand.

“In Acts 1:8 terms, where Jesus said, ‘You’ll be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth,’ we’re very much the Judea part of that mission field....Illinois as a mission field is Illinois Baptists and missionaries going to places like college campuses and cities and small cities and rural areas and bringing the gospel there as if it had not come there before.”

Discuss:

1. What part of the thoughts shared in the story are most convicting to you? How will this influence how you approach our ‘Judea’ from now on?
2. What can your church do to better support IBSA and its outreach in places you can’t go?
3. Make a list of three ways your church body could focus on reaching our ‘Judea.’ Take those options to God in prayer, then perhaps present them to your church family.

Concluding thoughts and prayers

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

Do I understand that the burden of reaching the lost in Illinois falls on me too? Do we as a church prioritize taking the gospel outside our doors? How can we pursue those who may not understand the gospel in English? How can we as a congregation better support ministry in the surrounding communities and our state?

Ask someone in the group to read Acts 1:8 aloud once more. Have volunteers each take a section of the verse to pray over your church’s outreach to:

- Jerusalem
- Judea
- Samaria
- The ends of the earth

Using the printed MIO prayer guide or the daily devotions in the *Illinois Baptist* newspaper or online, pray for:

- The missionaries and staff of IBSA, including Mark Emerson
- Camp managers Philip Hall and Mike Young and their staffs
- Carmen Halsey and IBSA’s women’s ministry
- Churches and pastors reaching lost people across Illinois, and for IBSA’s Pat Pajak
- All IBSA Zone Consultants, including Larry Rhodes
- Disaster Relief workers in Illinois and IBSA’s Dwayne Doyle
- IBSA’s Church Planting Team, including Tim Bailey and Ken Wilson
- Generous giving in all IBSA churches today
- Your church’s giving through the Mission Illinois Offering
- Your own gift through the Mission Illinois Offering

For additional materials for study and prayer, visit missionillinois.org.