

What's the difference between the BGCT and the SBTC?

Numerous readers have asked the Baptist Standard to prepare a simple chart that highlights key differences between the Baptist

General Convention of Texas and the breakaway Southern Baptists of Texas Convention. The charts on these two pages

are provided in response to this request. The presentation is not exhaustive but does represent the major areas of concern.

All data has been drawn from public documents and summaries of undisputed position statements. These sources in-

clude the bylaws, convention actions and news releases of each organization, as well as public comments of elected leadership.

DOCTRINE	ISSUE	SBTC POSITION	BGCT POSITION
	Understanding of biblical authority	Requires affirmation of the doctrine of inerrancy, which is generally understood to mean that the original manuscripts of the holy Scriptures were without error. This is a cornerstone of the SBTC's founding documents, and cooperating churches must affirm this doctrine. This position describes the Bible as "God's revelation of himself to man" rather than the "record of God's revelation of himself to man."	BGCT leaders and messengers repeatedly have affirmed the Bible to be the authoritative "record of God's revelation of himself to man" and a "perfect treasure of divine instruction" that is "truth without any mixture of error." While the BGCT includes individuals and churches who use the term "inerrant" to describe the Bible, most BGCT leaders and messengers in recent years have shunned that word as a politicized codeword more than a descriptive theological statement, while still affirming the complete authority and trustworthiness of the Bible.
	Understanding of biblical interpretation	Concurs with the Southern Baptist Convention's removal of a phrase from its doctrinal statement that identifies Jesus Christ as "the criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted." In advocating a literal reading of the Bible, SBC and SBTC leaders have said the Bible cannot be understood in different ways. Removing the phrase about Jesus as the criterion for interpretation was necessary, they contend, to remove the possibility that teachers or leaders might claim a deviant understanding of Scripture. Affirms the Baptist doctrine of the priesthood of all believers but cautions that biblical authority places limits on individual priesthood.	Opposes the SBC's removal of the phrase from its doctrinal statement that identifies Jesus Christ as "the criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted." To deny believers the right to interpret the Bible themselves through the witness of Jesus and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, BGCT leaders contend, is to deny that the word of God is "living and active" and makes religious leaders guilty of "bibliolatry." Strongly affirms the Baptist doctrine of the priesthood of all believers
	Understanding of Accountability	Baptist Faith & Message 2000 declares itself an "instrument of doctrinal accountability."	Rejects 2000 Baptist Faith & Message as a non-Baptist creed. Sees accountability to God alone.
	Understanding of humans	Affirms all humanity as created by God and in the image of God and emphasizes gender differences as creating role differences that are given by God as well. Thus, wives are to be "graciously submissive" to their husbands, and women are prohibited from serving as pastors. Sees all humans, both male and female, as living in a fallen, sinful state where redemption is made possible only through faith in God through Jesus Christ.	Affirms all humanity as created by God and in the image of God but does not emphasize gender differences as strictly as the SBTC. BGCT leaders and messengers have rejected the assertion that wives are to be "graciously submissive" to their husbands, instead reading Ephesians 5 to teach mutual submission. Also believes the issue of who may serve as a pastor should be left to the discretion of the local church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Thus, some BGCT churches would not allow female pastors, while others would. Sees all humans, both male and female, as living in a fallen, sinful state where redemption is made possible only through faith in God through Jesus Christ.
	Understanding of salvation	Affirms the need of all humans to receive eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ as God's Son and humanity's Savior through the process of regeneration, justification and sanctification.	Affirms the need of all humans to receive eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ as God's Son and humanity's Savior through the process of regeneration, justification and sanctification.
SOCIAL / ETHICAL	Sanctity of life	Affirms the sanctity of all human life. In 2000, passed a resolution calling abortion "murder" and calling on churches to boldly oppose "all methods of abortion."	Affirms the sanctity of all human life. Has passed numerous resolutions through the years condemning abortion except in cases of rape and incest or when essential to save the life of the mother. Also opposes "partial-birth" abortion.
	Homosexuality	The SBTC's constitution and bylaws include explicit statements opposing homosexuality. "We will not consider for affiliation or continued affiliation any church that has taken action affirming, approving or endorsing the practice of homosexuality. Such actions include but are not limited to the licensure or ordination of homosexuals, marriage or blessing of homosexual relationships and endorsing homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle."	BGCT messengers in 1982 approved a resolution stating: "The homosexual lifestyle is not normal or acceptable in God's sight and is indeed called sin." This position has been reaffirmed in various statements and actions since then. In 1996, the Messenger Seating Study Committee said: "The Bible teaches that the ideal for sexual behavior is the marital union between husband and wife and that all other sexual relations—whether premarital, extramarital, or homosexual—are contrary to God's purposes and thus sinful. Homosexual practice is therefore in conflict with the Bible." In 1998, the BGCT Executive Board voted not to accept funds from any church that "openly endorses" homosexuality or other sexual misconduct.
	Church and state	Affirms the Baptist doctrine of religious liberty and the need for separation of church and state, with greatest emphasis on keeping the state out of the church rather than the church out of the state. Endorses and funds the SBC's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. Does not relate to the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. Generally supports all school-prayer initiatives and taxpayer-funded vouchers for religious schools.	Affirms the Baptist doctrine of religious liberty and the separation of church and state, with emphasis both on keeping the state out of the church and the church out of official influence on the state. Supports the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, which was defunded by the SBC because of the BJC's more strict stance on separation of church and state. In its Adopted Budget has defunded the SBC's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, charging the agency and its president engage in partisan politics. Opposes government-sponsored school prayer and taxpayer-funded vouchers for religious schools.

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