



This lesson provides a brief overview of those calling themselves Baptist in the region in which we live. It is not intended to be a detailed review of all groups identifying themselves as Baptist.

Missionary Baptists

The term “missionary” began to be employed by some Baptists in the early 19th century to differentiate themselves from those Baptists assuming an extreme position in regard to Calvinism, missions, programs, and et.al. By incorporating the term “missionary” in their name, they indicated that they believed and practiced the sending of missionaries and the use of ministries such as Sunday School for the winning of the lost and disciple making of believers.

In 1845 the **Southern Baptist Convention** organized with the following statement on membership: “The Convention shall consist of messengers who are members of missionary Baptist churches...”

The **American Baptist Association** formed in 1924 “composed of regular Missionary Baptist churches.” The association was formed primarily of Southern Baptist Churches dissatisfied with governmental policies within the SBC, chiefly whether missionaries should be sent by and accountable to an associational board or a local church.

The **Baptist Missionary Association of America** was birthed in a split from the American Baptist Association resulting from controversies in the 1940’s.

Those of Baptist identity, whether by that name or another, can be traced back for centuries including to and beyond the Reformation. The organization of conventions and associations in America is not the beginning of the Baptist faith, but rather simply the organizing of Baptist churches into societies to promote missions, Christian education and benevolence among the churches.

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship was formed in the early 1990’s from a split in the SBC over questions of Bible authority and interpretation. According to the CBF website, “*The Bible neither claims nor reveals inerrancy as a Christian teaching.*”

Independent Baptists

In truth, all Baptist churches are independent or autonomous. In the SBC, ABA and BMAA, the associations or convention is answerable to the churches which comprise them. Further, each church governs itself under the headship of Christ.

Usually, when one sees an “Independent Baptist” church, it is referring to a conservative, fundamental congregation which is independent of association or convention. Often, such churches have an emphasis

on pastoral authority and specific codes of conduct and dress. Being Independent does not mean no fellowship exists. Rather organizations like the Bible Baptist Fellowship are organizations of pastors rather than churches.

Free Will Baptists

Free Will Baptists hold to the traditional Arminian position that while one may be initially saved by grace, he yet may lose his salvation. According to the website of the National Association of Free Will Baptists, "Since man, however, continues to have free choice, it is possible because of temptations and the weakness of human flesh for him to fall into the practice of sin and to make shipwreck of his faith and be lost." Free Will Baptists also practice foot washing as a church ordinance.

As a whole, the SBC, ABA and BMAA have more in common than in difference. As groups, they all hold to the Scripture as God's inerrant, infallible Word. They declare salvation by grace through faith not of works. They affirm security of the believer in Jesus Christ, aka perseverance of the saints. Within each group, however, there is diversity among the churches comprising the group including different viewpoints on everything from Calvinism to programs to worship styles.

Also, depending on where you live, there are Baptist churches that do not carry "Baptist" in their name and/or do not participate in any convention or association.

So, if you are in a position where you need to join a church, what do you look for? *Next week!*