



# The Challenge of Being Baptist: Owning a Scandalous Past and an Uncertain Future

*Bill J. Leonard*

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"Why would anyone want to be a Baptist? What are the best reasons for remaining Baptist? Does the name Baptist hurt more than it helps? This book is an attempt to address those questions by examining certain distinguishing marks of Baptist identity with particular attention to past approaches and current confusions. It explores classic Baptist approaches to polity, Scripture, conversion, and mission as they have impacted a Baptist witness in the church and the public square."

*Excerpted from chapter one*

The largest Protestant denomination in the United States is in the midst of a serious identity crisis; many Baptists are revisiting or turning away from the tradition, leaving others to become increasingly uncertain that the denomination can remain viable. Here, however, noted Baptist historian Bill Leonard wades through the murky waters of the Baptist past and explores the historic commitments of this unique people—all in an effort to shed light on its contemporary dilemmas and evaluate the prospects for a Baptist future. While encouraging members of the faith to thoroughly and fairly evaluate their heritage—and its many blunders along the way—Leonard ultimately argues that the Baptists' contentious "audacious witness" shown throughout its history still has a worthy role to play in the twenty-first century.

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