

Baptists best when they allow debate and dissent, San Angelo pastor says

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FRISCO—Since God made humans as spiritual beings, spiritual discussions matter, Taylor Sandlin, pastor of [Southland Baptist Church in San Angelo](#), insisted at the [Baptist General Convention of Texas](#) annual meeting.

In the annual meeting sermon, Sandlin directed his audience's attention to Mark 12:28-34 in the New Testament. After Jesus debated with Pharisees and Sadducees, he engaged in a discussion with a teacher of the law about the greatest commandments—to love God and to love your neighbors.



Baptists must continue to cherish and even encourage dissenting voices, explained Taylor

Sandlin. Baptists understand vigorous debates about spiritual issues, he noted.

“We are known on occasion for having lively debates,” Sandlin said. “But as Baptists, we have debates about spiritual matters because we believe the spiritual life matters.”

Sandlin identified a few Baptists in history who now stand as heroes because they chose to stand for their beliefs. William Carey, Lottie Moon and Martin Luther King Jr. present prime examples of leaders who used their dissenting voices to lead great movements, he said.

“In a world as complex as ours, Baptists must continue to cherish and even encourage dissenting voices as we seek to obey Jesus’ command to love our neighbors as ourselves,” he said.

Often, dissenting voices are belittled or ignored because they challenge people to change their routines.

“Dissenting voices are those voices that often press us into new ways of living out the kingdom of God,” Sandlin explained. “Our world is changing beneath our feet. It still remains in desperate need of the gospel, but we have to be open to all of God’s people, to all of the various places where the Spirit of God might pop up.”

Sandlin talked about his love for his children and how, although his love for them remains constant, his expression of love constantly changes. As they grow older, he must show them love in different ways.

Similarly, to love God and others as Jesus commanded, Baptist Christians must be open to changing the ways they express that love.

“Faithfulness often demands that we change,” he said.

Different churches will respond in different ways as they seek to love those

in their communities because the people in those communities are different, he added.

“It does us no good to disparage those we disagree with,” he said.

“If we can learn to love one another even in our disagreements, then Jesus just might say to us what he said to this man (in Mark 12:34), ‘You are not far from the kingdom of God.’”