



## THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

### Southern Baptist Convention

#### General Information

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is an alliance of autonomous Southern Baptist churches that “share a common bond of basic Biblical beliefs and a commitment to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the entire world.” Since its organization in 1845, the SBC has grown to be the largest Protestant denomination in the United States.

More information about Southern Baptist Convention, including the denomination’s beliefs, structure, and history, can be found by going to <http://www.sbc.net/>

**Number of Members in the US: 16.2 million**

#### Official Statements on Animals

##### *Humanity is the crowning work of God’s creation*

- **The Southern Baptist Convention holds firmly to the principle that individual churches are independent and self-ruling. The SBC, therefore, does not issue “official statements” that are binding on member churches. The SBC, however, does post confessions of its faith, and it issues annual resolutions that have been voted on by member churches. While these confessions and resolutions are not binding, they are indicative of members’ shared beliefs, opinions, and concerns. Among the SBC’s confessions of faith is the assertion that humanity is “the special creation of God” and “the crowning work of His creation.”**
  - “Man is the special creation of God, in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation....The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore every person of every race possesses dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.”  
--from SBC, [Basic Beliefs: Man](#).

##### *Animals may be used to serve human needs*

- **Animals may be used to serve human needs, as long as such uses do not violate the sanctity of human life. For example, the SBC permits the cloning of animals but not the cloning of human beings. It also permits the simple transfer of human cells into animals as long as the transfer does not “blur...the human-animal species barrier” created by God.**

- “RESOLVED, That, with the exception of cloning humans and human embryos, we do not oppose the use of nuclear transfer or other cloning techniques to produce molecules, DNA, cells, tissues, organs, plants, or animals...”  
--from SBC, [On Human Cloning](#),” June 2001.
- “RESOLVED, That while we support attempts at human somatic cell gene therapy for serious genetic illnesses if proper regard is given to informed consent, safety, efficacy, and the just allocation of available resources, we oppose any biotechnology that results in blurring the human-animal species barrier, such as the implantation of human brain cells into mice; and be it further  
RESOLVED, That while we support the use of simple gene transfer from humans to animals for drug production (e.g., human insulin, human growth hormone, clotting factor VIII) and therapeutic human-animal technologies such as the use of pig heart valves in humans, we oppose any human germline genetic modification that results in the destruction of human embryos or their equivalent (e.g., totipotential cells)”  
---from SBC, [“On Human Species-Altering Technologies,”](#) June 2006.

**Although we may use animals and other “natural resources,” human dominion has limitations**

- **Human dominion over creation is intended for the benefit of present and future generations. Dominion, therefore, has limitations and must be subject “to higher standards than to profit alone.”**
  - “God has designed us with a dependence on the natural resources around us and has assigned us a dominion of stewardship and protection of those resources for future generations (Genesis 2:7-15); ...Our God-given dominion over the creation is not unlimited, as though we were gods and not creatures, so therefore, all persons and all industries are then accountable to higher standards than to profit alone.”  
--from SBC [“On The Gulf Of Mexico Catastrophe,”](#) June 2010

**God has declared creation “good” and commanded humanity to “exercise caring stewardship” over it**

- **In the beginning, God declared creation good and commanded humans to “exercise caring stewardship and dominion over the earth and environment.” Since the fall, humans “have often ignored the Creator....and...defiled the good creation.” The SBC urges Christians to “renew our commitment to God’s command to exercise caring stewardship and wise dominion over the creation.”**
  - “WHEREAS, In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1), declared it good (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 32), and it reveals His glory (Psalm 19:1-6); and WHEREAS, God created men and women in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-27), placing them in value above the rest of creation and commanding them to exercise caring stewardship and dominion over the earth and environment (Genesis 1:28; cf. Psalm 8); and ...WHEREAS, Since the fall into sin, humans have often ignored the Creator, shirked their stewardship of the environment, and further defiled the good creation;...now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Greensboro, North Carolina, June 13-14, 2006, renew our commitment to God's command to exercise caring stewardship and wise dominion over the creation (Genesis 1:28); and be it further RESOLVED, That we urge all Southern Baptists toward the conservation and preservation of our natural resources for future generations while respecting ownership and property rights..."

---from SBC, "On Environmentalism And Evangelicals," June 2006.

**Caring stewardship requires us to take into consideration vulnerable species and their habitats, including "ecosystems of birds, shrimp, oysters, fish, and other life-forms"**

- **In 2010, the explosion of the Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico caused the largest marine oil spill in history. Lives and livelihoods were lost and the long-term damage to fragile marine animals and eco-systems is still unknown. The tragedy inspired the SBC to pass a resolution reminding members that God loves creation and wants us to "protect what God loves," including "the teeming life of the seas" and "the eco-systems of birds, shrimp, oysters, fish, and other life-forms."**

- "WHEREAS, On April 20, 2010, the deadly explosion of the Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico resulted in the deaths of eleven workers and touched off an underwater gusher of oil that has spewed millions of gallons of crude petroleum into the waters of the Gulf; and  
WHEREAS, This crisis is described already as the largest environmental calamity in American history; and  
WHEREAS, The oil spilling from the ocean's floor now poses a dire and immediate threat to the coastlands and inland estuaries, marshes, and waterways of the Gulf Coast of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, and to the eco-systems of birds, shrimp, oysters, fish, and other life-forms; and...  
WHEREAS, Holy Scripture tells us 'the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof' (Psalm 24:1, KJV), and that God's wisdom and glory is seen in the teeming of life in the seas (Psalm 104:25); and  
WHEREAS, God has designed us with a dependence on the natural resources around us and has assigned us a dominion of stewardship and protection of those resources for future generations (Genesis 2:7-15);...now, therefore, be it...  
RESOLVED, That we call on the governing authorities to act determinatively and with undeterred resolve to end this crisis; to fortify our coastal defenses; to ensure full corporate accountability for damages, clean-up, and restoration; to ensure that government and private industry are not again caught without planning for such possibilities; and to promote future energy policies based on prudence, conservation, accountability, and safety; and be it further  
RESOLVED, That we encourage persons, communities, industries, and governments to work together to find ways to lessen the potentiality of such tragic accidents and of such devastating pollution in order that we may protect what God loves and safeguard the lives, livelihoods, health, and well-being of our neighbors and of future generations; and be it further...  
RESOLVED, That we acknowledge that this tragedy should remind us to testify to the love of God in His creation and to the hope, through the blood of Christ, of a fully restored creation

in which the reign of God is seen “on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).”  
--from SBC “[On The Gulf Of Mexico Catastrophe](#),” June 2010

### Contemporary References on Animals

#### **Billy Graham: God is Interested in Animal Care**

- **Billy Graham’s radio, television, and newspaper ministries have made him one of the SBC’s best-known leaders and, according to a [Gallup poll](#), one of the most admired people of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 2010, Graham received a letter from a mother who worried that her daughter’s desire to devote her life to animal care was not something God is “really interested in.” Graham responded that the daughter “is doing a good thing in God’s eyes” because God “is concerned with the way we treat animals.”**
- “Yes, let me assure you that God is concerned about our care of every part of His creation - including the animals. After all, He made them, and ultimately they belong to Him. The Bible says, ‘For every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills’ (Psalm 50:10).  
“And what your daughter is doing is a good thing in God’s eyes, for He is concerned about the way we treat animals (especially those that depend on us). The Bible says, ‘A righteous man cares for the needs of his animal’ (Proverbs 12:10). On the day God made the animals, the Bible tells us that He pronounced it good (see Genesis 1:25). Should we ignore or treat cruelly something that God calls good? Of course not. Someone who is thoughtless or cruel to animals is also likely to be thoughtless or cruel to other people - who are made in God’s image.  
“Encourage your daughter to seek God’s will for her life - and if she is convinced God is leading her in this way, be grateful for it and encourage her....”  
--from Billy Graham, “[Is God Interested in Animal Care?](#),” *The Christian Post*, May 17, 2010.

#### **Billy Graham: When We Treat Animals with Contempt, We Treat God with Contempt**

- **Billy Graham received a letter asking if the Bible says anything about how humans should treat animals. Graham responded that “the Bible commands us to take care of animals...In fact,” said Graham, “the Bible says we must never treat any part of God’s creation with contempt. When we do, we are indirectly treating our Creator with contempt.”**
- “... God made everything that lives on the earth -- including the animals. In the beginning, the Bible says, “God said, ‘Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals....’ And it was so” (Genesis 1:24).  
“And yes, the Bible commands us to take care of the animals under our care. One of the signs of a righteous man, the Bible says, is that he takes care of his animals (see Proverbs 12:10). Even the animal of an enemy was to be treated kindly: ‘If you come cross your enemy’s ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to take it back to him’ (Exodus 23:4). One reason God commanded His people to rest one day out of seven was so their animals would be refreshed (see Exodus 23:12).  
“In fact, the Bible says we must never treat any part of God’s creation with contempt.

When we do, we are indirectly treating our Creator with contempt. Instead, God calls us to be stewards or trustees of His creation, and the Bible reminds us that we are responsible to Him for the way we treat it. We've often forgotten this -- but it's still true, and when we ignore it we not only hurt God's creation but we also hurt ourselves....”  
--from Billy Graham, *“Billy Graham’s My Answer,” Does the Bible say anything about how we should treat animals?*, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

**Millard J. Erickson: All creatures are part of God’s plan**

- **Millard J. Erickson is an ordained Baptist minister, professor of theology, and author of the acclaimed *Christian Theology*—a text that has been widely taught at Southern Baptist seminaries. According to Erickson, all creatures “have integrity as part of God’s plan” so “we must not despise any part of God’s creation.” Humanity, says Erickson, has a special function within God’s plan “to care for the rest of God’s world.”**
  - “Everything that is has value. We must not regard something as illusory or insignificant simply because it is not divine. Everything that is, while it is not God, has been made by him. He made it because he was pleased to do so, and it was good in his sight. It was a wise plan that brought into being just what there is within the creation. Each part has its place, which is just what God intended for it to have. God loves all of his creation, not just certain parts of it. Thus we should also have concern for all of it, to preserve and guard and develop what God has made. We are part of the creation, but only a part. While God intended man to use the creation for his own needs, man is also to have dominion over it, to govern it for its good. We therefore have a large stake in the ecological concern. In fact, Christians should be at the very forefront of the concern for the preservation and welfare of the creation, for it is not merely something that is there; it is what God has made. Everything within creation has its function; that of man is to care for the rest of God’s world. We must not despise any part of God’s creation. As different as some creatures may be from us, they have integrity as part of God’s plan.”  
--from Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), 385.

**Richard Land: God owns the Earth. He will require us to “give an account of our stewardship”**

- **Richard Land is president of the SBC’s Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, host of two nationally syndicated radio programs, author of numerous books, and one of *Time* magazine’s “Twenty-five Most Influential Evangelicals in America.” Land points out that the Earth belongs to God and “we don’t have the right to treat it as if we own it.” Although God has given us dominion over creation, continues Land, dominion comes with the responsibility to “exercise creation care.” One day God will require us to “give an account of our stewardship.”**
  - “[A]s a Christian we believe that the earth is the Lord's. It is divine ownership. God owns the Earth, we don't own it. We don't have the right to treat it as if we own it. Secondly, we have human responsibility. Genesis chapter 1 tells us that God put man in charge under his headship. Human beings have dominion and are given dominion, but then that's tempered by Genesis chapter 2, where man is put into the garden to till it and to keep it. The word 'keep' means to guard and to protect. We would call it Earth-care creation here. To till it

means to cause it to bring forth its fruit, to plow it, to cultivate it...We have a divinely mandated responsibility to both develop the Earth for human betterment and to protect it and guard it and keep it and to exercise creation care. And we will give an account of our stewardship.”

--from “[Bob Abernethy’s Interview with Richard Land](#),” *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly*, November 17, 2006, Episode no. 1012

**Richard Land: The future return of Christ does not absolve us of the responsibility “to give respect to all life”**

- **God made a covenant with “every living creature,” says Land, so “we don’t have the right to treat any life with disrespect.” The promised return of Christ to Earth does not absolve us of the biblical command “to exercise creation care.”**
- “...we are to give respect to all life, God made a covenant with all of life, with every living creature in Genesis chapter 9, and we don't have the right to treat any life with disrespect.... Christians who think that we should just ignore the environment, we should just ignore the creation because the Lord’s coming back soon and we shouldn’t worry about it. Well, I personally have never met an evangelical Christian who believes that....I would specifically repudiate it. ....I’m a Christian, and I have a Bible, which is my lifestyle manual, and the Bible says that we are to be stewards of God’s creation....I believe that history will culminate in a radical second advent of Jesus Christ to judge the quick and the dead and to redeem his creation and humankind. But I specifically repudiate that you can draw from that that we can ignore the biblical admonitions and the biblical commands to exercise creation care.”  
--from “[Interview with Richard Land](#)”

**Richard Land: Food animals should be treated “as humanely as possible”**

- **God allows humans to use animals for food, says Land, but we must treat them “as humanely as possible...[W]e do not have the right to deliberately mistreat or neglect any living creature.”**
- “The Bible is very clear that God made a covenant with every living creature, which means that while I may eat steak (and I do; as a Texan I consider it my patriotic duty to eat steak) we should seek to treat cattle as humanely as possible, and when it is time for them to have their lives end to be used for human good that that should be done as humanely as possible, and we do not have the right to deliberately mistreat or neglect any living creature.”  
--from “[Interview with Richard Land](#)”

**Richard Land: Animals should not be caused pain for nonessential purposes like cosmetic testing**

- **Animals may be used for vital human needs, like drug testing, but we have no right to cause pain or discomfort to animals for nonessential purposes, like cosmetic testing. Even when animals are used for essential purposes, we should do so “as painlessly as possible.”**

- “...if we need to cause the death of some animals, as painlessly as possible, but if we need to cause the death of some animals to create a Salk vaccine? We haven't only the right to do so, we have the obligation. I don't think we have the right to cause animals pain or cause animals discomfort to create new cosmetics...”  
--from “[Interview with Richard Land](#)”

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For more religious statements on animals and other resources, visit [www.humanesociety.org/faith](http://www.humanesociety.org/faith).