

# **Skit One: The Beauty of the Rose**

**by David A. Waganer**

**Part One:** *(This person should start sharing the following paragraph.)* I want to talk with you for a few minutes about being Compelled to Cooperate through the Cooperative Program. The Cooperative Program is now 69 years old. Many of us have grown up with the Cooperative Program and don't either know or even think about what Baptist life was like before the Cooperative Program was organized.

**Part Two:** *(This elderly man should interrupt the speaker from his seat in the crowd.)* I could well remember what life was like prior to the days of the Cooperative Program.

**Part One:** Sir, will you come and share what it was like prior to the Cooperative Program.

**Part Two:** My father had often complained about the pressure he felt almost weekly from the circuit of missionaries who would come through making their appeal for financial support. My father felt he had given about all he could give in the regular offering. He struggled with what to do. He knew we had limited resources and yet he had a heart for missions. Amidst the limited supply of financial resources, he would usually give something.

Many times on the way home, I would hear my father say something that got me to thinking. He usually would be talking to my mother but I could hear him. His repeated lines were, "there simply must be a better way for Southern Baptists' to support the missionaries."

During the early 1920's Southern Baptists came up with a plan called "The \$75 Million Dollar Campaign." As a result of the success of that Campaign, Southern Baptists realized they could do so much more together than they could possibly do as individual congregations supporting missions. Finally, in 1925 the Cooperative Program was started.

Many years later on a cold winter night in my church the discussion centered on the Cooperative Program. A member in an uncontrollable manner began to attack the Cooperative Program. I listened even though I completely disagreed and then stood to my feet in support of the Cooperative Program.

I shared of my experience as a small boy and the frustrations of my father with the long lines of missionaries coming to our church almost every week seeking our support. The thought of my father's repeated phrase, "there simply must be a better way for Southern Baptists' to support the missionaries," came to my mind for the first time in years. As I shared the story of the birth of the Cooperative Program and my support of it with those dear fellow members, God seemed to draw my attention to a beautiful red rose on the Lord's Supper table at the front of our worship area.

*(Walk over and pick up the Rose.)* With my cane in hand I started my walk towards the table and took the red rose from the vase. I held it in my hand for a while and didn't say a word. My

thoughts quickly were formulated as I began to think about the rose and how it related to the Cooperative Program.

The Lord seemed to give me the comparison. These are the words that I shared with that handful of people. The rose is a beautiful flower. It has become the symbol of love between one person and another. Persons desiring to send a clear message of love to someone will do it with the gift of a rose. Prior to the 1920's, Southern Baptists' needed a way to say to the entire world that they were loved. Prior to 1925 and the birth of the Cooperative Program, the unorganized methods for supporting could be compared to "gathering wildflowers" and attempting to send a message of love to the world.

My father's words, "there simply must be a better way for Southern Baptists' to support the missionaries," once again came to my mind. Could it be that what my father was saying was that we must use more than wild flowers to speak of God's love to the world. The world is dependent upon a more effective vehicle for sharing such a message of love. The world needs to be the recipient of a rose.

Could it be that the Cooperative Program is the Rose that Southern Baptists have utilized as the channel for the past 69 years, to declare the message of God's love. As a result millions of people have come to know of God's love.

Like holding a beautiful red rose to a needy world, Southern Baptists' have held high such a rose in the Cooperative Program. Those who have been touched through the beautiful channel of mission support should not be too quick to throw it away. Let us remember a few things about it. First, just as the rose comes from God, so does the Cooperative Program. Second, those who have been the recipients of the ministries made available through the Cooperative Program and those who receive roses have something in common, both are recipients of expressions of love. Third, let us remember that the rose and the Cooperative Program are vehicles used for expressing such love. *(The elderly man presents the rose to the other person.)*

*(Closing)*

**Part one:** Southern Baptists' have a rose with a stem, thorns, and petals called the Cooperative Program, but what will we do with the rose?

END