

Skit Four: The Blooming of the Rose

by David A. Waganer

Reader 1: We've talked about the parts of the rose, its beauty and its fragrance. Think with me for a minute of the blooming of the rose. The rose begins a small, hard bud, but when matured begins to slowly open - responding to the natural elements such as wind, rain, sunlight, cold and heat as God planned. The bud does not turn into a bloom overnight but goes through a process instead.

Discerning and being obedient to God's will is also a process as we, like the rose bud, are exposed to elements such as sound teaching, prayer, Bible study, Godly fellowship and counsel. To those who have been obedient to God's call by becoming the bloom of the rose, the Cooperative Program has been a lifeline of support for them.

Listen with me to a conversation taking place between a committed Southern Baptist minister and his daughter. Charlotte and her family have been serving as foreign missionaries to Zimbabwe and are home for their first furlough.

Father: It is certainly good to have you and your family home for a while. The past four years have certainly been filled with both good and difficult times for you as a family.

Daughter: Dad, we've truly seen the work of the Lord in our lives and throughout the area of the world where the Lord has placed us. Miracles have been present everywhere. We've experienced them in our family, in our work and even in some areas that we wouldn't have ever guessed the handiwork of the Lord would touch.

Father: Have you had a difficult time adjusting to the culture?

Daughter: No, in fact we've had a more difficult time adjusting to the changes that have occurred in this country since we've been gone than we did adjusting to the changes in approach to life that we've experienced in Zimbabwe.

Father: How does it feel to be serving Southern Baptists' on the foreign mission field?

Daughter: I had no idea what it would feel like to serve on the foreign field. To be a part of what Southern Baptists' do through the Cooperative Program channel is beyond words.

Father: Honey, if you could talk to Southern Baptists about the Cooperative Program, what would you like to tell them?

Daughter: Dad, as you know I grew up learning all about the Cooperative Program and seeing a percentage of the offering that I gave each week through the church go on to support the work of Southern Baptists. I didn't think that I would ever see the Cooperative Program be questioned.

Father: Honey, you seem to be extremely troubled over the uncertainty of the Cooperative Program?

Daughter: Yes, I am quite troubled about the ongoing controversy in our convention.

Father: What exactly do you mean?

Daughter: Our concern is in the area of knowing that we are going to be able to count on Southern Baptists' to continue to support us in our desire to fulfill our Call to missions.

Father: I don't think there's anything to worry about. Southern Baptists' have always been a mission minded people.

Daughter: Dad, I think you need to take your blinders off and see that Southern Baptists' are currently spending so much of their time on divisive issues that they are now divided about the mission channel for the future.

Father: Perhaps you are correct.

Daughter: Our family is so burdened about this dilemma that we are really uncertain if there will be enough mission money to even send us back to our mission field after our furlough. We made our commitment in answer to God's call. We made the necessary preparation in education in college and seminary, we gained the experience needed for appointment, and we have committed ourselves to stay in Zimbabwe for a life time. We believe God wants us to serve Him there and to build churches and reach people for Christ. However, the controversy among Southern Baptists and the uncertainty of support among some have made Tim and me ask the question of late, will we be able to stay and fulfill our commitment to Christ? Will Southern Baptists continue to support missions? Will there be adequate support through the Cooperative Program to enable us to do the work we need to do on the field? All of these questions have been running through our minds of late as we have thought about our going back to Africa.

Father: *(Walks over and takes a seat beside his daughter and reaches out and takes her hand.)* Honey, some Southern Baptists' might walk away from supporting missions through the Cooperative Program. However, I've been around for awhile and can assure you of one thing. I'm a Southern Baptists' and I might only be one, but I'll continue to support you and others just like you as you live out your Call to missions. I believe you will see one Southern Baptists' after another joining hands, working together, supporting missions with their prayer support, and giving through the Cooperative Program for many years to come. Southern Baptists' are a mission - minded people.

Can Charlotte and her family continue to count on our support? Just as Charlotte and her father have joined hands in support and prayer, we ask that you join hands with each other as we pledge our continued prayer and financial support for all our missionaries around the world as they bloom where God has planted them. Let us pray.

(The above mentioned conversation is based on a true story between one foreign missionary and her father.) END