

ONE FOR ALL

by Robert Simms

RICKAngela's husband, about 35-45 years old

ANGELARick's wife, about his age

(The scene is the living room of Rick and Angela, a couple in their thirties or forties. Rick is seated RIGHT at a table reading mail from a stack. Angela is at her own small desk LEFT, about six feet away, working through her own stack. Behind them ten feet or more is their daughter Janie, who is playing a piano or keyboard. Prepare in advance an audio tape to play on the sound system featuring a verse from each of the following hymns:



*I Surrender All
Living for Jesus
Take My Life and Let it Be
Here is My Life
I Am Thine, O Lord
Jesus is Lord of All
Take My Life, Lead Me Lord*

The volume should suggest that the piano is in the background, though the tunes should be easily recognizable.)

RICK: *(Looking at a letter he just opened)* Had you heard anything about a special offering for the Central Eastern Europe mission region?

ANGELA: I've never heard of the Central Europe... whatever it was.

RICK: Says here it's a region identified by the International Mission Board. Includes Russia, Belarus, Romania, Czech Republic — bunch of others.

ANGELA: And our church is taking an offering for it?

RICK: That's what this says. This Sunday at the first of the service.

ANGELA: Huh. *(Has opened her first piece of mail and is startled)* Hey, wait a minute. This letter says we're going to take one for Eastern South America, not Central East... whatever it was.

RICK: What?

ANGELA: Yeah, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay. You sure you have the right date?

RICK: Says right here.

ANGELA: So does this one. Oh, but we take this offering ten minutes into the service. Weird. Never heard of scheduling things by minutes.

RICK: Strange. (*Has opened another letter and is looking over it*) What is going on, here? It's another offering. They're gonna take it just before the sermon.

ANGELA: What's it for?

RICK: Church planting in the Southwest U.S.

ANGELA: (*Rapidly opening envelopes*) Here's one for Missouri Baptist higher education..and another one for chaplains in New York...and here's one for East African missions. At least that one is two Sundays away.

RICK: And here's a letter promoting an offering for Southern Seminary..and another one for a separate offering for Southwestern. Both of them are supposed to be taken, let's see, three weeks from now. Hey, look down in your stack and tell me how many letters came from our church. (*He counts his own*)

ANGELA: Fifteen.

RICK: I've got twelve more. I'll guarantee you every one of them is about some new offering. This is crazy!

ANGELA: Here's one that looks a little different. I'll open it... (*She does so, scans the letter*) It says, "We guess you've noticed all the special offerings coming up in the next several months. Every one of them is important. If you only give to the ones you are especially excited about, some of our missionaries will have to come home. Please surrender your all to the Lord, then pray, and give to every offering." —Can you believe this?

RICK: Yeah, I have the same letter, here. Look at the bottom: "There are many more special offerings that need to be taken before the end of the year. We will space them out for your convenience."

ANGELA: The nerve! I mean, okay, missions is important, but good grief! We can't give to all these offerings. Even if we could, we'd spend all day just writing the checks.

RICK: I know we take Lottie Moon, Annie Armstrong, and the State Mission Offering, but we've never done this before. (*Pauses a beat, begins to be suspicious*) Something about this smells fishy.

ANGELA: (*Opening yet another letter*) This one comes from the pastor, not just the church. Wonder if he's going to try to defend all this.

RICK: I've probably got one, too, somewhere here. What does he say?

ANGELA: "Dear church member" —(*sarcastically*) so personal!!

RICK: Well, we do have 800 church members.

ANGELA: Sorry. "Dear church member, By now you've read dozens of letters announcing special, upcoming offerings for mission causes around the world and in our state. Please don't worry. We've conveniently combined *all* these offerings

into one. We take it every Sunday at the regular time and in the regular way. It's called The Cooperative Program. 15% *(or substitute your church's percentage)* of your regular offering goes to support all causes of Missouri Baptists and Southern Baptists. Just thought you'd like to have some idea how much Baptists do when they give, and how much trouble we are saving you."

RICK: I knew it! *(Laughing)* I knew there was some trick.

ANGELA: *(dryly)* What was your first clue?

RICK: Ha ha. *(Opening another envelope)* Uh oh. What's this? It's a notice of some kind. "Dear Cooperative Program giver, This is to gratefully inform you that your gifts last year made possible ministry and missions resulting in more than 1,600 churches planted in North America, and 8,369 churches and 421,436 baptisms overseas. Because you surrendered your money to God, and gave to carry out the Great Commission of Christ, about a half a million new children were born into the everlasting kingdom of God." *(He pauses and is silent momentarily.)*

ANGELA: It's worth it all, isn't it.

RICK: *(Nods)* Definitely.

END