

Promoting Our Program

*"All Our People
in All Our Work"*

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"Promote" is a good word (*pro*, forward—*moveo*, move). It means to cause to move forward toward some desired end. "Program" is a good word too (*pro*, before—*grapho*, write). It means a prearranged plan or course of procedure. To promote a program, therefore means to work according to a carefully prepared plan for the realization of a desired end.

Jesus had a program, world-wide and age-long (Matt. 4: 1-11; Luke 4: 17-21). Jesus commanded his followers to promote this program and assured them of his presence (Matt. 28: 18-20). That was a real co-operative program.

Southern Baptists have a program. It is based upon the program of Jesus and seeks to carry out his plan. His program has become our program. Such a program must be promoted for his sake, and for the sake of a lost world.

How May We Worthily Promote This Program?

1. First of all, we must have a clear conception of what this program is and what it seeks to accomplish. Remember that the program is not an end in itself, but only a means to an end which is both divine and devoutly to be desired. This program takes Jesus Christ seriously and seeks to spread his teachings, exemplify his spirit and carry out his commands. This program is the result of many years of study, prayer, and experience in seeking the best way for Southern Baptists to do the things Jesus wants them to do.

This program is very comprehensive. It includes State Missions, Foreign Missions, Home Missions, Christian Education, Ministerial Relief, Orphanages, and Hospitals; in fact, it includes all the definitely missionary, educational, and benevolent work of the denomination, except the support of the local churches themselves.

This program seeks to provide funds for the support of the work of all these agencies in proportion to their needs. On the basis of their budget needs the percentages of distribution of funds are determined and authorized by the Southern Baptist Convention. (The State Conventions determine the state objects to be included and the percentages of distribution.)

The percentages fixed for the Southwide causes for this year are as follows: Foreign Missions, 50; Home Missions, $23\frac{1}{3}$; Ministerial Relief, 7; Education Board $3\frac{1}{3}$; Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, $4\frac{1}{5}$; Southwestern Theological Seminary, $4\frac{1}{5}$; Baptist Bible Institute, $3\frac{9}{10}$; American Baptist Theological Seminary (Negro), 1; Southern Baptist Hospital, $2\frac{1}{2}$; W.M.U. Training School, $\frac{8}{15}$; total, 100%.

This program seeks to inform all our people and enlist them in the support of all our work. When one contributes a dollar to this program he is contributing to all the missionary and benevolent work his denomination is doing in all the world. What a program!

Nothing Wrong with Program

There isn't anything wrong with our program; the trouble is with us. This program has the hearty approval of all our agencies. Our state secretaries, the executive heads of our mission boards, and of our educational and benevolent institutions approve this plan. If all our people or even a majority of them would take this program seriously and act consistently we would have funds coming in

constantly and sufficient to carry on all our work, and our burdensome debts would disappear like banks of snow under a summer sun. Our problem is to get more of our people, *all of them*, promoting all our program.

2. If we would successfully promote our program we must have a sympathetic understanding of our people. We can't enlist them unless we know them. Baptists can't be handled as some people can. They are an independent lot. They recognize no Lordship but that of Christ. They can be led but they cannot be driven. They do not take things for granted; they must be shown. They are suspicious of centralized power and imposed programs. They must know the reasons *why* as well as the matters *what*.

It is right that they should be this way. We must stand in the liberty with which Christ made us free.

But Baptists can be shown; and when they are correctly informed about our program: what it is, how it was made, what it is for, what it is trying to do—when Southern Baptists know these things they will co-operate. Baptists love their Lord and want to do his will.

Nothing to Hide

We have nothing to hide. There is not an item in our program that any loyal Baptist would object to if he thoroughly understood it. Baptists are moved more by concrete facts than by abstract principles; they are more interested in saving folk than in saving budgets and programs! They will contribute more to help missionaries preach Christ than they will to a percentage table.

All this is simply saying that we must lovingly, patiently, concretely present the matters included in our program in order that our people may understand and be constrained to contribute. It is more important to fertilize and cultivate a tree than it is to beat the

branches. Our people will respond more liberally when cultivated more intelligently. Here is where we pastors must keep busy. No one can do the pastor's work except the pastor himself (Acts 20: 28).

Make Adequate Preparation

3. If we would successfully promote our program we must make adequate preparation. The Co-operative Program nor any other will work unless we work it. There is no easy road to success. We must be willing to work and pray and keep on at it if we would succeed.

The Co-operative Program is based upon the assumption that an Every Member Canvass will be put on intensively and extensively in every church. To do this successfully we must begin early.

The pastor is the main man in every case. You can't reach the smallest Baptist church in the South over the head of its pastor. This is as it ought to be. But it throws a great responsibility upon the pastor.

The Pastor's Part

The pastor should study to become an expert in this matter upon which the success or failure of our work so largely depends. (Very excellent literature may be had free from our state secretaries.)

The pastor should preach on the Program of Christ and what we are doing to carry it out; he should tell his people about the various objects in our program, illustrating same with concrete examples; there should be prayer meetings and conferences with various church groups; a special Every Member Canvass Committee should be carefully chosen; this committee should have several meetings for prayer and instructions. The church membership should be carefully studied, cards should be made out giving names and addresses of

members. These cards should be numbered and put in bunches (not more than ten or twenty in a bunch). These bunches should be assigned to visitors who should go in pairs. Arrangements should be made for serving a light lunch (sandwiches and coffee) at the church on the Every Member Canvass Day so teams can go out promptly.

It will help mightily if the pastor and the special committee will set the example by each signing up in advance; then have a deacons' meeting and get each of them to sign; then get the Sunday school workers, the B.T.U. leaders, the W.M.S. leaders to do the same. This will enable you to start well on Every Member Canvass Sunday.

The Every Member Canvass Sunday should be announced well in advance. The budget for local expenses and the Co-operative Program should be printed and distributed or written on a blackboard so all can see and understand.

This Plan Succeeded

4. And now if we would succeed in promoting our program we must intelligently, tactfully, winsomely present it to our folk. Here is a plan that worked well in one church:

The pastor *preached* a short sermon on the love of Christ for his church; he asked how much do we love our Christ and his church and how are we showing it. He then read the budget and briefly explained it. He then took the subscription card and explained it (cards had already been placed in the hands of the congregation). Here he prayed. Then he read the card again line by line and asked every one to join him as he filled in all the blanks.

The cards were then gathered up and the congregation was dismissed. A light lunch was then served. (The cards of those who had pledged already were now taken from the bunches of cards.) When the lunch was over there was a brief prayer; the cards were then

given to the visitors, who went immediately to call upon the members. The teams came back in the afternoon making their reports.

That night the cards were presented at the several B.T.U. meetings and all were asked to sign at the preaching service to local expenses and Co-operative Program. (If any one had already signed he made notation on his card.) Others were asked to sign.

On Monday the various W.M.S. circles were asked to sign up; each circle tried to get 100% of its members to sign; some had to be seen later.

The next Sunday the cards were presented in each Sunday school class above the Primaries and again at the preaching hour. The final result was beyond our expectations.

A Thorough Follow-up

5. Finally, if we are to promote successfully our program we must have an intelligent, business-like follow-up system.

- (1) Accurate records must be kept.
- (2) Information slips should be mailed quarterly (monthly would be better) so each subscriber will know how his account stands.
- (3) A special Every Member Canvass Committee should keep on the job all the year soliciting those who have not already pledged and also soliciting new members as they join the church.
- (4) Special appeals should be made from time to time asking members to pay up their pledges, asking those who have not pledged to do so, and asking those who can make extra (thank) offerings to do so.
- (5) All the year the subjects of Missions, Education, Stewardship, and so forth, should be prayerfully and tactfully kept before the people.

- (6) Study classes in missions, stewardship, and so forth, should be had from time to time; information begets inspiration.
- (7) The spiritual life of the people must be constantly cultivated else the tree of benevolence will fail to bear much fruit. Hence the importance of constant prayer, evangelism, and so forth.

Keep in Mind

It is more important to inform than to exhort; give the folks the facts.

It is better to fertilize and cultivate a tree than to continually beat the branches. Make folk want to give instead of trying to force them to give.

Baptists are more interested in concrete things than in abstract theories. Tell some incident or experience that stirred your own soul.

Baptists cannot be driven but they can be led, and they delight to follow Jesus if they know which way he is going. Tell them.

The pastor's example in living and giving is worth much more than his precept or preachment.

It is better to get a small offering than none at all.

It is better to get designated gifts than no gifts at all.

It is better to get a little co-operation than to have much indifference or opposition.

He that is not against our program is for us.

There is no danger of Baptists knowing too much about their own affairs. Turn on the light.

You don't need to protect your people against giving, they can do this themselves.

Let us so act that if the Master cannot say of us "Well-done," he can at least say "Well-tried."

"We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."—Jesus.