

# **LEADERSHIP LESSON # 55: WHAT EVERY LEADER SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM**

OUTLINE BY W. STACEY BOUTWELL

## **What the Cooperative Program Is**

The Cooperative Program is the **unified ministry support system** of the Southern Baptist Convention. It allows all Southern Baptist Churches to work together in support of a wide array of ministries within their states, in the US, and world-wide. It allows the entities and people who carry out those ministries to focus on the Great Commission rather than having to divert their energy and resources toward raising funds through special offerings. Since its beginning in **1925**, the Cooperative Program has been one of the most effective and efficient methods of supporting missions and ministry in history. It is a wonderful stewardship tool that has enabled thousands of missionaries to carry the Gospel throughout the world with minimal overhead and administrative cost.

## **How It Works**

Step One: **Believers** give their tithes and offerings to their local churches.

Step Two: Each **local SBC church** determines a percentage of its annual operating budget that will be given to the Cooperative Program. These funds are then sent to the state convention.

Step Three: Each **state convention** determines through its budget, established at its annual meeting, what portion of the funds received from the churches will be used for ministry within its state and what portion will be entrusted to the Southern Baptist Convention through the Cooperative Program for missions and ministry world-wide.

The ministries supported by state conventions include a variety of training for local church leaders and consulting for local churches, new church plants, Baptist colleges and universities, children's homes, and evangelistic efforts.

Step Four: The **Southern Baptist Convention** receives the funds from the state conventions and distributes them to a slate of ministries through its budget. The slate of ministries and the budget that supports them are approved at the annual meeting of the SBC.

The key ministries supported by the Southern Baptist Convention are the International Mission Board, the North American Mission Board, the six SBC seminaries, and the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission. The IMB and NAMB each have over 5,000 missionaries on the field.

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