

# Teamwork

by Dick Gruber

**F**or 25 years, Darlene and I have served as a team both in marriage and in ministry. The writer of Ecclesiastes writes, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:9–12).

Two are better than one. When two people join together to accomplish God's work, great things can happen. In the early days of our ministry, Darlene and I often collided rather than cooperated. Sad to say, this was mostly my fault. Every team must have a leader, and I was slow in discovering the dynamics of leadership.

It took time to understand each other's skills, approach, and expectations. As the lead member of the team, I eventually learned to soften authority with compassion, to administrate rather than agitate, and to listen rather than lecture. Basically, I learned to *serve* my teammate.

## Give and Give

The world teaches that successful teamwork requires *give* and *take*. I believe that God's plan for a successful team requires *give* and *give*. The first and most important directive for the ministry team is to "serve one another in love." So many difficulties in Sunday School and



children's church teams would be vanquished if the members would choose to serve.

Over the years I have experienced and observed what I call *teamwork deficiencies*. When a team is in conflict, I can usually trace the problem back to one or

more team members becoming upset because his or her "rights" were violated. This deficiency causes the team member to enter the *take* mode and trouble begins. The rights of individuals are to be placed on the table in favor of the benefits cooperation breeds.

Communication is vitally important in team teaching or preaching. Team members must discuss, record, and restate expectations. If an objective or responsibility is not clearly defined, misunderstanding can occur. When misunderstanding is allowed to go unresolved, major conflict results. Major conflict destroys team effectiveness.

We once preached a boys and girls camp out east. Camp seemed to be running well, but the spiritual results I expected were nonexistent. Three days into the camp, I discovered there was a deficiency in the counseling staff. Sides had been chosen and lines drawn. These good Christian people were angry at each other.

I opened the service that evening by dismissing all adults. I encouraged them to leave the room so that I could have church with the children. They were not to come back until they had settled their differences.

