

## MAINTAINING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG CHURCH LEADERS

By Bob Young

As I travel and have the opportunity to talk with churches, church leadership groups, and church members, I am acutely aware that not many churches escape the problem of troubled relationships. Relationship issues often come up—sometimes in an official way when I consult with a group of church leaders, and more often unofficially and informally in conversations within the congregation. Troubled relationships may arise within families (between spouses or between parents and children), between families within a congregation, within the church leadership, between groups within the church, between the church leaders and the church, and in numerous other ways.

It is likely unrealistic to expect all of our working relationships to be harmonious all of the time, but within the context of the church, our relationships should be healthy most of the time. Lots of things cause relationships to go wrong. Many factors contribute to troubled relationships, but I am thinking of three that are especially important.

**Communication:** Relationships require that those involved keep talking. One must know when to speak and when to keep silent. There is nothing worse than team members joined together in ministry not knowing how the others on the team are feeling or thinking. That is why church leaders should attempt to touch base frequently — even if it is just a phone or email contact. Many problems could be avoided if elders and deacons and teachers and preachers were in more regular contact.

**Competency:** "Know what your job is and do it." Be the very best you can be at the job you have. Many church leadership problems occur because there are not clear assignments or expectations. If job descriptions or expectations are unclear, it is impossible to evaluate performance. If job descriptions are not in place, leaders may be expected to accept responsibility for areas beyond their abilities or competency. Too often, rather than address the lack of productivity and need for training, we ignore it until it is too late.

**Commitment:** I am amazed at how some tolerate disloyalty in and to church leadership. A major factor in avoiding relationship problems is mutual commitment. Married couples with mutual commitment will have fewer problems in their relationship. Leadership teams who are committed to one another will have fewer relationship problems. I am not talking about turning a deaf ear to things or ignoring reality, but I am saying contention within the church leadership team will eventually create friction throughout a congregation — perhaps even destroy that congregation. We can get along, but it takes loyalty, patience and determination.

The Bible gives us principles for strong relationships. We can get along, but we have to work at it.