Teams and the New Testament (3): Challenges and Pitfalls
By Bob Young

Putting together a team is a great challenge. Two previous articles introduced the basic concepts of team members, using prayer as a first step in team formation, and defining the task to be accomplished by the team as essential.

This article addresses the fact that one of the greatest challenges any team will face is the failure or departure of team members. Sometimes team members quit because the pressures or circumstances are overwhelming. Some team problems come because team members fail to build healthy, supportive relationships. Some team members simply run out of coping skills, or find that the redefined mission of the team is not what they really want to do with their lives. These challenges are so important, and so likely to occur, that every team must be prepared for these possibilities.

By far the most challenging cause of team breakdown is the spiritual or moral failure of a team member. Men and women with great potential and tremendous capabilities sometimes fail or fall. Those one might least expect to encounter such problems are caught. Why do good people fall, and what can a team do to anticipate and address the problem?

Wayde Goodall (*Why Good Men Fall*) explains that
> *"There are reasons people make bad choices, and it doesn't happen overnight. There is an evolution—one thought, decision, or move at a time.… The behavior began somewhere…. The thought process had been going on, but the decision wasn't made until the opportunity presented itself."* (p. 13)

Sound Biblical teaching and a strong commitment to Biblical morality is the key to avoiding ethical and moral failure. This suggests that an essential part of forming teams that will work in God's kingdom formation is the development of a supportive Christian community with mutual commitments and values. A necessary component is the identification of personality or character weaknesses and the willingness to address these specific areas. Teams must not ignore the possibility of sin entering the camp—they must identify in advance the challenges and the warning signs, and most important, develop a plan for avoiding such deadly traps.

It is beyond the scope of this brief essay to develop all of the possible problems that could lead to team breakdown and failure, but here is a short list. Teams (and individual team members) must consider and talk about the challenges that will arise from ethical issues and understandings, sexual issues, relationship development (some team members have favorites among other team members), attitudes of entitlement, money, cultural differences, leadership and accountability, emotions (especially anger), depressions or moodiness, unforeseen stresses and pressures, and the tendency to compartmentalize life.