**Christian Relationships: Achieving Accountability**

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**What is accountability?**

Biblical accountability is giving an account according to the standard of God’s Word in the context of personal relationship.

* To be accountable is to be responsible.
* We are responsible for living lives according to the standard of God’s Word.

Research shows that accountability is ESSENTIAL for any social system:

“Social systems in general can be defined in terms of common sets of shared expectations for behavior. Accountability, then, might be thought of as the adhesive that binds social systems together. Without the capacity to call individual agents to answer for their actions, there is no basis for social order, for shared expectations, or indeed, for the maintenance of any type of social system.”1

The Church holds us accountable for following Jesus, and carries out a process of gentle, loving discipline when we’re not following Jesus.

Accountability fosters spiritual growth because it allows for a safe space to be honest, confess our sins, celebrate victories, pray, and share what God is doing in and through us.

**Who/what are we accountable to?**

We are accountable to God.

* “So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.” Romans 14:12
  + Other scripture: Matthew 12:36, Hebrews 4:13
* We are accountable for our very selves, including our words and deeds

We are accountable to uphold the Word of God.

* All people are held accountable to God’s Word to whatever extent they understand it (Romans 2:12-16)
* All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.) This will take place on the day when God judges people’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.
  + God’s law is written on our consciences

We are accountable in personal relationships

* The level of accountability varies depending on the relationship
  + We don’t need to tell our darkest sins to every person we meet
* Model good behavior and hold each other accountable to godly living (Titus 2)
  + Older men and women should model behavior to younger men and women
* Accountability among peers (Galatians 2:11-14)
  + Paul called out the hypocrisy of Peter and Barnabas
* Accountability for those in leadership positions (James 3:1)
* Confessing sin
  + Admit fault to the people most affected by our sin; expand outward as you seek help in restoration (Matthew 18:15-16)

**Why is accountability important?**

Two are better than one.

* Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
  + “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor. For if one falls down, his companion can lift him up; but pity the one who falls without another to help him up! Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one keep warm alone? And though one may be overpowered, two can resist. Moreover, a cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”
  + One partner who changes to a healthier behavior, the other partner is more likely to make a positive health behavior change than if partner remained unhealthy.

We are united with Christ and grow in Christlikeness

* Romans 8:1-2, Colossians 3:1
  + Accountability to God is life-giving and freeing
* Proverbs 27:17 – “Iron sharpens iron”
  + Sharpening a knife – use a sharpening stone. The combo of friction, heat and close contact sharpen the knife.
* Accountability isn’t just about controlling behavior or enforcing consequences – it’s about pursuing a deeper relationship with God.

It reflects the image of God

* We are created in the image of God, meaning we are communal beings intended for fellowship
  + Genesis 2:18: “It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to him.”
* We are to live in authentic relationships. (Proverbs 28:13)

We are connected to the body of Christ

* 1 Corinthians 12:26 – everything we do and experience as individuals affects the body as a whole.
* Galatians 6:1-2 – we restore others and carry each other’s burdens.

We are set free.

* James 5:16 – the prayer of a righteous person is powerful; accountability brings healing
* Galatians 5:1 – we are free in Christ; don’t be bound by sin.
* In confession and prayer, we find healing and correction. This leads to freedom.

**How do we hold each other accountable?**

Confession and prayer

* James 5:16

Speak the truth in love

* John 8:32
* Ephesians 4:15
* This includes asking questions and sharing truths.
  + Asking pointed questions
    - Questions related to sin
    - Questions about spiritual growth
  + Gently share biblical truths
* Ask people questions you wish they’d ask you!! Don’t settle for shallow.

Choose honesty

* “What if someone lies?”
* One day, we’ll give an account for every secret sin and lie
  + Ecclesiastes 12:14, Psalm 90:8, Matthew 10:26
* We can’t live in close fellowship if we aren’t revealing truth about ourselves
* Consider accountability software, technology boundaries, etc.
* Our sin will be exposed in the future, so it makes sense to confess it in the present.

Take action

* Matthew 5:29, James 4:7
* Put barriers between ourselves and temptation
  + Share your passwords, bank account info, etc.
  + Fast from technology
* Have a clear plan in place for what to do when temptations arise
* Have a clear plan in place for pursuing Christ daily

Examine your hearts together

* Superficial accountability: “Did you commit [sin]?” “Did you mess up?” “Are you ok?”
* Biblical accountability must be deeper – Psalm 32:3-4
  + Ask what and why – open ended questions
    - What are you thinking? Feeling? Doing?
    - What are you thinking of doing?
  + Explore motives, not just actions

Build each other up

* 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Hebrews 3:13
* Listen, laugh, cry, and pray together

**How do we find accountability?**

* Pray – ask God to lead you to a trusted person
* Ask – don’t be afraid to ask for an accountability relationship
* Meet regularly – determine a time, place, and frequency of meeting
  + Establish a habit of cancelling a meeting, not scheduling a meeting
* Make a plan
  + How do you want to grow spiritually? What do you need accountability for?
  + Establish goals
    - A study looking at accountability:
      * With an accountability partner, 65% more likely to achieve goal
      * With specific plan, 95% likely.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Who are your five closest friends? Are they mission-minded? Like-minded?
   1. How do they help you to grow in Christ-likeness?
2. Who are the people who make you love God more?
3. Who can you safely share your soul with?
4. Do you have a mentor? What step can you take to find a mentor?

**Questions about spiritual growth**

Are you finding consistency in your daily time with God?

* Are you praying?
* Are you studying His word?
  + What Bible verses are you studying? Memorizing?

What are you learning about God?

What are you learning about yourself?

What steps of faith are you taking in obedience to Christ?

Are there areas of your life that are hindering your spiritual growth?

How are you growing in the fruit of the Spirit?

Have you been attending and engaging in church life?

How are you making your family a priority?

What temptations are you facing?

Is there anything you need to surrender to God?

Have your words, actions, and thoughts reflected Christ this week?

Are you honoring God in the way you steward your finances? Your time?

Are you withholding forgiveness from someone?

How are you showing love and care for your family? Friends? Neighbors? Coworkers?

Who’s salvation are you praying for? Who are you sharing your faith with?

What are you grateful for today?

***Have you been honest with your answers?***

**Questions related to sin**

What were you feeling?

What led up to [circumstance/situation]

How did you feel following [circumstance/situation]

What does scripture say about [circumstance/decision]

What step do you [we] need to take to set up a new guardrail?