

Moving Forward

Biblical Accountability

Most Christian Leaders acknowledge the importance of accountability. However, when a well known pastor falls we often discover that accountability relationships were weak, a thing of the past, or even non-existent.

There is little research into how many Pastors have good accountability structures, but research from the Barna Group looked into accountability in the church in general. They did a survey in the USA and found “among people who describe themselves as Christian and involved in a church discovered that only 5% indicated that their church does anything to hold them accountable for integrating biblical beliefs and principles into their life.”¹

If accountability is lacking in the church in general then it is not a surprise to find it lacking in the Christian leadership.

Covenant eyes, an organisation that helps with porn addiction identify different reasons why people are resistant to accountability:² Here are a few of them.

- People hate conflict.
- Christians do not understand that sanctification is a community project.
- People like their privacy.
- Christians falsely believe accountability is only for behavior modification.
- Some Christians have experienced unhelpful (or hurtful) accountability.
- Christians falsely believe accountability in the church is only a crutch for when things get really bad.
- Christians are not disciplined.
- Christians lack quality friendships.

There are a few more reasons why leaders, in particular, might be reticent in entering into strong accountability relationships.

- Pride
- Fear
- Isolation
- Flesh
- Busyness

Ironically, these are often the very reasons that we need accountability more than ever.

Example - Mark's Story

Mark moved to be a missionary in Slovakia. His new situation meant he didn't have good accountability relationships. He became unsure about his identity and purpose, started to work too much and started to falter in his devotional times, family times and personal disciplines that would normally fill him up. This led to a long period of depression and a nervous breakdown. Old struggles with sins came back as he was looking for an escape and a high and he felt cut off from God.

As a result of this experience, as God healed and restored him, Mark realised the importance of strong accountability relationships.

¹ <https://www.barna.com/research/national-study-describes-christian-accountability-provided-by-churches/>

² <https://www.covenanteyes.com/2013/07/15/10-reasons-why-accountability-in-the-church-is-unpopular/>

Biblical accountability is more than just monitoring each other, it is actually about carrying each others burdens.

Galatians 6:1-2

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. 2 **Carry each other's burdens**, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

The context of this verse makes it clear that **accountability is all about helping each other to keep our lives healthy, in step with the Holy Spirit.**

Accountability is a place to find:

Encouragement
Health and Freedom
Correction and Direction

Encouragement

Elijah was somebody who experienced severe burnout. 1 Kings 19:1-5. He had been ministering non-stop for a long time. He had experienced great highs in ministry but was spiritually, physically and emotionally exhausted. It was at this point that Jezebel threat was enough to send him into a downward spiral that left him crying out for God to take his life. If you read the story of Elijah you will find that, although he was an incredible man of God, there were also some signs that he was starting to do things in his own strength.

Elijah isolates himself at a time where good accountability relationships could have helped him to eat, rest and listen to the voice of God. Something he learnt in the end.

Accountability isn't just about making sure that you don't do things wrong, it is also about making sure you rest, you are filled up, you are having those quiet times, and you are not isolated. It is about encouraging each other.

Health and Freedom

One of the most famous verses relating to accountability in the Bible is found in James.

James 5

16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

Confession of sin to God brings forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Confession of sin to one another brings healing and freedom.

It can bring physical healing. It can certainly also provide spiritual and emotional healing. Accountability relationships are places where we feel safe enough to be totally honest, but also a place where we will find prayer and encouragement to break free from the sin that traps us.

Correction and Direction

Accountability relationships also allow people in close enough to see things and point out things.

We are often unaware of many things that everybody else around us are certainly aware of. If we are in a position of leadership then people will often be reticent to tell us what we really need to hear.

James goes on to say, and actually ends his letter with:

James 5

19 My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, 20 remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

Accountability is about allowing others to identify things in our lives and provide correction and direction.