

Christian Accountability

What is accountability?

Is it Biblical?

Why should we want it?

Why don't we want it?

What is the difference between accountability and judgement?

What does this statement mean? "It's between me and God" or "its between them and God"

What is the difference between accountability and control?

How would either pride or humility play into this?

What part does repentance play in all of this?

What are the extremes on both sides of it?

How could this actually hinder your relationship with God?

What are the qualifications of an accountability partner(s)?

How is this different than friendship?

How can our women's group integrate this?

10 Reasons Why Accountability in the Church is Unpopular **Monday, July 15, 2013 | Written by Luke Gilkerson**

A Barna Group telephone survey of Christians across the United States reveals some interesting facts about the state of accountability in the church: only 5% of people say their church does anything to hold them accountable for integrating biblical beliefs and principles into their lives.

10 Reasons Accountability is Unpopular in the Church

For those who are held accountable by their church community in some way, the most common approach to accountability is through a small group. But even so, among those who attend a small group, only 7% say accountability is one of the functions of their group.

Why the distaste for accountability in the church?

There could be, of course, many reasons why formal accountability is uncommon. But as I survey the landscape, these are the reasons I see.

1. People hate conflict. The Barna Group states church leaders don't often engage in accountability (either through following up on members' tasks, home visits, or church discipline) because they don't want to be confrontational. The same is true among church members. Few people want to call out others on their sin.

2. Christians do not understand that sanctification is a community project. Many texts in the Bible assume or state outright that one of the ways we grow as Christians is through gospel-centered conversation with one another. The New Testament places great importance motivating one another to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24-25), bearing each other's burdens (Galatians 6:1-2), and instructing one another (Romans 15:14). Many Christians are never taught that sanctification is a community project.

3. People like their privacy. Accountability is about confessing sin to one another, but few today like the idea of divulging their temptations, sins, and the state of their heart. This is far too personal for some.

4. Christians are not taught (seriously) about biblical accountability. James 5:16 is not a suggestion but a command. "Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed." Moreover, this is a command tied to our health as Christians. In this text James mentions cases where personal sin leads to a serious physical or emotional illness, calling for the elders of the church to administer healing. Before we get to that point, however, we should be in the practice of the regular "preventative medicine" of confessing our sins to each other and praying for each other.

5. Christians falsely believe accountability is only for behavior modification. Some reject the idea of accountability because they believe it is all about fear or shame-based change. Accountability for them is about staying away from certain taboo sins so they can avoid an awkward conversation in the future. But the Bible says there's a kind of conversation we can have that actually addresses the heart—not just outward behavior (Hebrews 3:13).

6. Some Christians have experienced unhelpful accountability. For some Christians, their accountability partners and groups simply did not “work” for them. They experienced no change. But what if we used this excuse for anything in which we engage: listening to sermons, praying together, taking communion, engaging in service projects? We don’t give up on any of these things because at times they don’t seem to “work.” Rather, each time we strive to do them better, with a true heart, and with careful thought.

7. Christians falsely believe accountability in the church is only a crutch for when things get really bad. Often we seek out accountability when things have come to a head in our lives, when we are facing a grave consequence. But the various “one anothers” of the New Testament are not just for those facing specific consequences for their sin, but for all Christians.

8. Christians are not disciplined. Accountability makes most sense in a context of discipleship: being personally mentored, guided, and directed by spiritually mature individuals, and in the context of a community of disciples. In a church culture that makes true disciples, accountability is the most natural thing in the world.

9. Christians lack quality friendships. Accountability is also most natural in a gospel-centered friendship. We need the kind of friends mentioned the proverbs: men and women who stick with us through thick and thin, who aren’t afraid to confront us, and who compel us to do what is right. Accountability is not only giving an account of my sin to another, but receiving an account of God’s grace in return from a Christian friend.

10. Christians have not tasted gospel-centered accountability in the church. The gospel of Christ is what guides and protects good accountability. Informed by the gospel, a good accountability partner will not be condemning, but gracious. Informed by the gospel, a good accountability partner will treat sin seriously because Christ took sin seriously. A good accountability partner will use the eternal promises of the gospel to motivate us to a higher standard. As Christians, we need to be taught how to do this well.

Christian Accountability

Christian Accountability - A Need for Support

Accountability is essential for any society to function and Christian accountability is no different. We are all held accountable in one way or another. For example, there are laws to obey and if we fail to be obedient, we may have to suffer the consequences set by the officials who hold us accountable. Accountability is simply being responsible for one's actions.

There are several accountability groups that specialize in assisting people who would like to overcome an issue, addiction (including sexual addiction), or other tendency. As humans, we find support, comfort, and motivation from others who are struggling with similar life circumstances.

There are Christian accountability groups as well. Christians need support and comfort and often find this through Christian accountability. There are two essential elements to accountability: trust and the ability to relate.

Christian Accountability - The Essential Element of Trust

In order to establish Christian accountability, there needs to be trust. Developing trust is a slow process and it takes time to develop and grow. As people meet together to share, they begin to establish a rapport with one another. How is this accomplished? Let's see what the Bible says.

Active listening is essential to developing trust. James 1:19 says, "My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."

A non-judgmental attitude is another essential element. Remember, we can be accepting of an individual while being discerning of the situation. Matthew 7:1-2 says, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

Caring for each other is also essential. 1 John 4:21 says, "And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother."

Accountability involves a willingness to open yourself up and share sensitive or personal information. This is why trust is so imperative. If you sense trust, you are more open to share your innermost thoughts without concern of betrayal.

Christian Accountability - The Essential Element of Relating

Relating is an important factor in Christian accountability. It is helpful when the group shares a common bond or has been through similar experiences. People who relate to one another can empathize and share with an understanding heart. People can feel comfortable in sharing their circumstances, and can be totally accepted without fear of rejection.

Christian Accountability - Biblical Guidance

Does the Bible speak of Christian accountability? First of all, the Bible says that God holds us accountable. Romans 14:12 says, "So then each of us shall give account of himself to God." This is personal accountability.

Christians are also accountable to one another. In 1 Corinthians chapter 12, we read that Christians are all part of the same body - the body of Christ - and each member needs or belongs to the other. This Scripture suggests the importance of strong accountability between Believers. It is important for every Believer to have at least one other person in which to confide, pray with, listen to, and encourage.

Galatians 6:1-2 gives a helpful principle, "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." If your accountability friend has done something contrary to the Bible, you are called to confront him gently, forgive him, and comfort him. It also admonishes you to consider yourself because no one is above temptation.

Another aspect of Christian accountability is encouraging each other to grow in their spiritual maturity. Hebrews 10:24 says, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds." 1 Thessalonians 5:11 says to, "...encourage one another and build each other up..."

Are you accountable? Do you have a friend to whom you can go? Will that person hold you accountable in your spiritual walk? Are you the type of person that people can come to when they need accountability? Do you want a Christian accountability partner?

Read Christian Accountability Page 2 Now!

Christian Accountability
(Read Christian Accountability, Part 1 First)

Christian Accountability: Part 2. (Read Part 1 First!)

Christian Accountability - Personal Action

Do you want to develop Christian accountability in your life? Here are some steps to help you find an accountability friend or group:

Begin by praying for God to reveal the person (or group of people).

Consider the possibilities: people in your church, work place, close friends, a man or woman you respect, etc. Search for people who are going through similar circumstances or have experienced them in their past. Perhaps you would feel more comfortable joining an online group. Be open to God's leading. (Note: it is important in one-on-one situations to select someone who is the same gender as you to avoid putting you or another in compromising circumstances.)

Invite the person to lunch, meet each other's family, or talk on the phone. If it's a group, ask if you can attend a meeting to see what it's like. Get to know one another. Do you get along? Do you enjoy your time together?

If you are confident that this is the right person or group, ask if they would be your accountability friend(s).

Christian Accountability - The Next Steps

Be patient. Developing an accountability friendship takes time and intentional effort. Participate in activities together and pray regularly for one another and with one another. If your friend confesses an issue, like, "I'm really having trouble spending enough time with my kids," then next time you meet, ask about that issue. This will begin a basic accountability relationship.

Then you can begin to hold one another accountable for things like: Bible reading and prayer, physical habits like exercise and dieting, establishing a good witness at work, integrity issues, and so on. Remember, it is essential to keep your discussions confidential!

If possible, it is wise to establish a set time where you can meet together or talk on the phone. This creates consistency and shows how much you value your accountability relationship. Perhaps when you meet, you want to do a Bible study together or share what you've been learning in your quiet times with God. This will get the discussion started.

Consider the following accountability questions for your discussion time:

What principle impacted your life from your quiet times this week?

Do you feel you have been faithful to share your faith this week?

Have you spent daily time with God in Bible reading and prayer?

Have you given 100% effort in your job and home responsibilities?

Have you been able to express love to those around you?

Have you had opportunity to express encouragement and praise to your spouse, kids, or another family member?

Has your thought life been pure?

What was your biggest joy this week?

How were you tempted and how did you respond?

What have you done to enhance your relationship with your spouse?

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up..." Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

Grow More Now!