

A Call to Accountability

Accountability in the 21st Century

We begin this article by considering the thoughts in Heb. 10:25 *“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”* The second part of the verse is especially what we want to consider. We live in the 21st century and the day of the Lord must be approaching.

In Genesis 4 we have the account of Cain and Abel. We understand Cain’s attitude and response to his circumstances led God to asking him several questions. The questions we want to focus on are in verse 9. “Where is Abel thy brother?” And Cain’s response, “I know not: Am I my brother’s keeper?” In essence, Cain was asking if he is accountable for his brother.

You may not find ‘accountability’ called out by name very often in the Bible, but that does not mean the Bible has little to say about being accountable to someone, and the brotherhood. This frequently overlooked principle wields much power in our battle against the forces of the dark kingdom of this world. Let us examine what the Bible says about accountability, and how it should be practiced.

The New Testament frequently uses the phrase “one another”; in most of these cases, it is referring to an aspect of accountability. We need to realize that ultimately, we are accountable to God (Romans 14:12), and that our Heavenly Father is the best accountability partner we could ever ask for. He fully understands our temptations and weaknesses, and He can interpret the intents of our heart. In the Day of Judgment, our eternal destination will depend on whether or not we were willing to hold ourselves accountable to God, confess our misdeeds and temptations to Him, and seek reconciliation when we failed. We should not seek to replace this relationship with our Savior; rather, we should seek to be like Him and to strengthen our brothers and sisters with the meager means we are able to provide. We all desire to experience the joy of having our sins opened to go before us to the Day of Reckoning (1 Timothy 5:24), that we may be found spotless and worthy of Eternal Life in heaven.

Understanding that there is no replacement for the divine accountability, let’s consider the added benefit of accountability among our brotherhood. 1 Corinthians 12 explains that the church is the “body of Christ” and we are all “members” of that body. Verse 26 says, *“And whether one member*

suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.” Therefore we understand the importance of belonging one to another, and being accountable to each other.

With that in mind, let us examine why accountability is so vital. There are many evils and much temptation in the world around us today, and it seems as though Satan is working overtime to create even more. In the face of such temptation, it is wise to seek out an “accountability partner” to pray with and to help share the burdens that come with facing this spiritual warfare. Consider that King David was alone the evening that Satan tempted him into adultery with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11). It is a very valuable asset to have a brother or sister that we can count on when we are tested. Together we can be stronger as we edify one another.

The Bible tells us we fight a war not of flesh but of the spirit, against powers and spiritual forces. (Ephesians 6:12). Knowing we are in a battle against the forces of darkness, we should desire as much help as we can gather around us. This should include making ourselves accountable to another believer who can encourage us in the fight. Paul tells us that we must be equipped with all the power that God supplies to fight this battle: *“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”* (Ephesians 6:13). We know without a doubt that temptation will come. We must be prepared.

Satan knows our weaknesses, and he knows when we are vulnerable. He knows when a married couple has had a disagreement and may feel resentful towards each other. He knows when a child has been punished by his parents and may be feeling spiteful or indignant. He knows when things are not going well at work and just where the tavern is on the way home. Where do we go for help? We want to do what is right in the sight of God, yet we are weak and prone to failure. What is the answer?

Proverbs 27:17 says, *“Iron sharpeneth iron; So a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.”* A friend’s countenance in this verse can mean a look or expression of encouragement or moral support. When was the last time you had a friend call you just to ask how you were doing? When was the last time you called a friend and asked her if she needed to talk? Encouragement and moral support from a friend are sometimes

the missing weapons in fighting the battle against Satan. Being accountable to one another can provide the advantage we need to gain the victory.

The Hebrew writer summed it up well when he said, *“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”* (Hebrews 10:24–25). We have a responsibility to the brotherhood to build each other up. Also, James implies accountability when he says, *“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”* (James 5:16).

We’re all familiar with the teachings in Matthew 18, and those of us that are church members have confessed to be submissive to having the teachings therein used on us, and also to be willing to follow those teachings to identify trespasses in a brother’s life. Accountability is definitely not a replacement for the teachings in Matthew 18, but rather it provides a peaceful, loving way for brothers to be reconciled after Matthew 18 has been used. Galatians 6:1-2 says, *“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”*

Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, provides direct instruction for an accountability relationship. When working with a brother or sister in an accountability relationship, we need to be very careful of our character and motives. An individual has the potential to ruin relationships and permanently damage another by not being considerate and respectful of the sensitive information shared.

We should first of all remember the spirit of meekness. We need to truly love and honor the person we are working with, even esteeming them above ourselves. Outdo one another in showing preference and honor to each other (Romans 12:10) Passing judgment on someone that we are holding accountable will yield detrimental results. Confidential sharing time with one another can quickly lead to avenues of condemnation when criticism or judgment is felt. Do not judge or condemn one another (Romans 14:13).

Neither does the Bible allow any room for slander (James 4:11). Accountability relationships often result in very intimate personal details being shared that could easily compromise someone’s self-confidence and cause very deep issues of hurt and mistrust if these details are not guarded.

1 Tim 5:13 and 1 Peter 4:15 give instructions to not become busybodies. We must guard against the inclination to become busybodies. On the other hand, the potential for being accused of being busybodies has hindered many people from reaching out. This is detrimental to spiritual growth among us.

An accountability partner can be there to encourage you, rebuke you, teach you, rejoice with you, and weep with you. But let us not reserve accountability for those struggling with a prominent issue in their lives. If we proactively hold each other accountable, we may very well prevent or lighten many burdens or trials in the lives of our brethren; we need to simply humble ourselves. It can be very challenging to reach out to a brother for the first time when you are experiencing an issue, and you need help. Likewise it can be awkward to be an accountability partner for someone that has never really been open with you and now is coming to you for help with a struggle they are facing. Accountability is most effective when done through a genuine heart of compassion, and it will take some time to “grow into” this practice. Finally, even the best attempts at accountability will not succeed without 100% complete, unchanging honesty. Do not lie to one another (Colossians 3:9). Accountability partners that cannot be honest with each other will only intensify an already complicated problem.

Here are a few references for you to ponder:

- Earnestly love one another as Christ loved us. (John 13:34-35, 15:12, 17, Romans 12:16, 13:8, 15:5, 7, 1 Corinthians 12:25, Galatians 5:13, 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:9, 2 Thessalonians 1:3, 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 23, 4:7, 11-12, 2 John 1:5)
- Comfort and edify each other. (Romans 14:19, 15:14, 1 Thessalonians 4:18, 5:11, 15, Galatians 5:15, 26, James 5:9)
- Be at peace with one another. (Mark 9:50, John 5:44, Ephesians 4:2,32, 5:21, Philippians 2:3, Colossians 3:13, 1 Peter 5:5, 1 John 1:7)

