



ESTABLISHING ACCOUNTABILITY

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NORTHSTAR INSPIRATION

*Emotional
Health Insights
from a Christian
Perspective*



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*As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.
Proverbs 27:17*

STRUGGLES WE FACE

We live in a very selfish and sinful world. All around are temptations to lie, steal, cheat, brag, and take the easy way out. Staying on the straight and narrow path is often difficult and not always very appealing, especially when no one is watching. Our world says: “Nobody will know! Everybody does it!” But hidden sins quickly gain momentum and can tighten their grip on one’s life. Satan hides in the shadows and works in the darkness. Exposing your life to the light powerfully breaks the stronghold of secret problems. Jesus is our light! “Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.” Psalm 51:6

WE ARE NOT ALONE

It is good and liberating to have a friends who know us in the depths of ourselves, for who we truly are, and still lovingly accepts us. Our need for acceptance and approval can be so strong that we hide the truth, rather than risk possible embarrassment or rejection. People need to confide in someone they can trust.

WHAT IS ACCOUNTABILITY?

Accountability is a mutual understanding of giving an explanation for one's actions. In order to be helpful, accountability requires honesty in facing your struggles, habits, and temptations. With openness and transparency, reveal them to a trusted friend. Accountability is a biblically-based principle to support one in breaking bondages fueled by secrecy, receiving guidance, and giving others the opportunity to pray for us. The Bible commands us to carry each other's moral burdens or weaknesses, and in so doing we "fulfill the teaching of Christ." (Galatians 6:1-2)

SUBMIT TO ONE ANOTHER

Many are uncomfortable submitting to honest questioning by others, yet we like to think we are being held accountable. I call this "pseudo-accountability." When a pastor asks us on Sunday morning, "How are you doing?" we might mention a general concern or tell him we are doing well. This is not accountability. It does not go deep enough into the hidden struggles of the soul. "If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions." (Galatians 6:3-4)

WHY IT WORKS

The Bible is very clear believers should identify problem areas of life and change them! "For whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it." (1 Peter 3:10-11)

We easy to fool ourselves into thinking we are safe and on the right course, but the wise person recognizes the value of another perspective and opinion, and listens to it. Proverbs 12:15 tells us: "The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice."

Being held accountable by someone intimately acquainted with your strengths and weaknesses is often the single most empowering help you can receive from someone else. In one quick process, accountability blends encouragement, honest evaluation, love, grace, and acceptance to give you courage to stand up and fight the good fight. Knowing what you do in private will be shared with your accountability partner may have a powerful, preventative effect on your behavior.



USES OF ACCOUNTABILITY

- Deepen your relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Overcome a bad habit such as smoking, drinking, or gambling.
- Conquer sexual temptations and addictions such as lust, pornography use, or adulterous relationships.
- Eliminate harmful relational interactions such as criticism, complaining, or gossip.
- Take control over impulsive tendencies such as shoplifting, lying, and compulsive spending.
- Rise above racism, prejudice, and judgmental attitudes toward others.
- Strengthen your relationship with your spouse and friends by acting in a more honoring, consistent, and mature manner.

BASIC STRUCTURE FOR ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNERS

1. Be willing to be held accountable in specific areas of concern, habitual sin, or struggle.
2. Find one person who can consistently serve as your accountability partner.
3. Look for a same-gender person as your accountability partner.
4. Try to find someone who is not a spouse or family member.
5. Use a trusted, respected, committed Christian whom you believe will be supportive, non-judgmental, and committed to prayer.
6. The accountability partner is not a trained counselor and should not try to stop your behavior. An accountability partner is committed to actively listening, offering prayer support, and providing a “safe” place to share struggles. Ultimately, you are responsible for your own actions.
7. Accountability partners must maintain confidentiality. Do not tell others what you have learned.
8. In order to be helpful, accountability must be specific. Asking someone, “How are you?” is insufficient. Develop a set of questions, generally eight to twelve, between partners. These questions can be written out and kept by each partner. Ask specific questions regarding habitual sin or problem areas, target goals, positive behaviors such as prayer, quiet times, church attendance, Christian fellowship, and family time. Seek information about progress, not perfection. The final question of the set should ask if the previous questions have been answered honestly.
9. Keep your time short and simple. You may use this process in person or over the phone. Five minutes to review the questions is sufficient and should keep the time from turning into an unintended counseling session. The power of the process is in asking the questions, NOT in the answers.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS YOU CAN USE

Directions: Identify a target problem you would like to change. Develop a list of questions helpful to you. Apply each answer to today and this week.

Example Target Problem: Ongoing struggle with anger.

1. Did you say something out of rage today without thinking about your response?
2. Have you examined your motive for being angry?
3. Did you find yourself quarreling with a spouse, child, or co-worker?
4. Did you sense bitterness toward people in your life?
5. Did you acknowledge your actions as wrong and hurtful, confess your sins, and ask God to forgive you?
6. Did you forgive others and seek their forgiveness?
7. Have you kept your commitment to prayer?
8. Have you kept your commitment to read Scripture?
9. Have you kept your commitment to attend church?
10. Were you honest in answering all of the above?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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He received his Master's Degree from Wheaton Graduate School, his Doctorate of Psychology (PsyD) from the Illinois School of Professional Psychology, and his Certificate in Co-Occurring Disorders from Adler Graduate School. He serves frequently as a seminar leader, and has taught workshops in the USA, Canada, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, South Africa, and India.

He is the author of *Journeys* and *Destinations*, two books on co-occurring disorders treatment, and the co-author of *Finding Hope Again: Overcoming Depression* with Dr. Neil T. Anderson.

This information in this publication is not intended as a substitute for professional help or to be used as a diagnostic tool. If you have serious difficulties with anxiety, depression, or other mental health issues, please seek professional help.