

Accountability Remains Crucial in Pursuing Vital Relationships

Part One: Getting Ready

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”—Ecclesiastes 4:8-12

It occurs to me that, as we keep emphasizing accountability and vital relationships with other men, we need to provide some information and assistance for those who are interested. I am convinced that many men are not in an accountability relationship either because they don't understand what it is, or because they do not know how to get started. Hopefully, through a series of articles, you will be better equipped to begin, maintain and ultimately benefit from having vital relationships with a few other men.

What Is Accountability?

“Face to face, brother to to face, one friend to another...” Does that sound familiar? *“Man to man, shoulder to shoulder ... Man to man, serving each other...”* If you went to Promise Keepers in 1993 or 1994, you may recognize this tune. *“Brother to Brother we'll strengthen each other...Working together, we're building the Kingdom of God.”* It gives me goose bumps just typing the words. This could easily be called “The Accountability Song,” because it really hits on some key points of accountability:

"Face to face ... " Being accountable to someone means you sit face to face, look that person in the eye and honestly, openly discuss what is going on in your lives.

"Shoulder to Shoulder..." Accountability means standing by your brother's side through thick and thin. One is not above the other; both are equal.

"We'll Strengthen each other..." Through vital relationships, we become stronger, as we help each other through struggles, temptations and shortfalls, and as we encourage one another towards spiritual growth. *"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."* (Proverbs 27:17). Did you know that swords can actually get sharper during a sword fight? How? Because, as they come into contact, they knock off the small rough spots on the blades, and serve to smooth each other; thus producing an even more finely honed cutting edge. In the same way, men sharpen one another by coming into contact and "smoothing out the rough edges."

Let me talk about what accountability is not: It is not guys getting together and talking about how often they have sex with their wives. It is not guys sitting around naked beating drums. It is not guys getting in touch with their "inner child." It is not simply another support group or Bible Study. It is not wimps getting together and whining about how unfair life is. It is not men sitting around bashing women.

Accountability Is...

A few men getting together to share their lives. (I think two to four is an ideal number.) Guys getting to know each other beyond the casual and superficial; beyond "sports and the weather." Brothers allowing themselves to be challenged, and held to a higher standard than the world would dictate. Men being honest with each other about their struggles and shortfalls. Guys praying together, and for each other. Brothers growing together toward Christlikeness, reaching

their full potential as men of God. And all of this takes place in an atmosphere of love and acceptance, without judgment. *"How good and pleasant it is, when brothers live together in unity!"* (Psalms 133:1)

The Bible tells us to:

- Love each other. (John 15:17)
- Serve one another in love. (Galatians 5:13)
- Be kind and compassionate to one another. (Ephesians 4:32)
- Carry each other's burdens. (Galatians 6:2)
- Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other. (James 5:16)
- Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. (Romans 12:10)
- Accept one another. (Romans 15:7)
- Encourage one another and build each other up. (1 Thessalonians 5:11) Spur one another on toward love and good deeds. (Hebrews 10:24)

I could go on, but I think you get the idea. You are, in fact already accountable to many people: Your family, your employer, your friends and so on. But those relationships differ from the "vital relationships" we are talking about here.

Typically, accountability is automatic, or "part of the job." The difference with "vital relationship" accountability is that it would not normally occur, or even be expected to occur. It is voluntary and intentional; not because I have to, but because I want to. It is specifically for the purpose of growing as a Christian, and dealing with the struggles and shortfalls in our lives. *"Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?"* (Amos 3:3)

Why Accountability

A common question men ask is why? Being the independent

creatures we are, the idea of “needing” other men in our lives does not sit too well with us. You know the real reason the nation of Israel wandered in the desert for forty years?

Because, even then, men refused to stop and ask for directions! Guys do not want to rely on anyone else for anything.

A couple of factors that keep men from developing close relationships are pride and fear. Do you ever have trouble admitting when you have made a mistake, or that you are wrong? I do. When we get into “vital” relationships with other men, it will ultimately require us to be vulnerable and transparent, and to admit that we have faults and problems. And that can be quite uncomfortable for most men. “I don’t need anybody else!” Sound familiar? I spent most of my life believing that.

But, time after time, the Bible shows that *“It is not good for the man to be alone.”* (Genesis 2:18) I do not believe God was simply referring to a man’s need for a wife. I believe He was stating our need for each other in general.

The Bible is filled with examples of vital relationships among the great men of God. Moses had Aaron. David had Jonathan. *“And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself.”* (1 Samuel 18:3) David said *“I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women.”* (2 Samuel 1:26) Paul had Silas, Timothy and Titus, to name a few. In fact, once Paul was led by God to witness at Troas, but he did not, because he would not go there alone: *“I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there.”* (2 Cor. 2:12) Jesus had the twelve, and an even closer relationship with Peter, James and John.

Do you see that all of the men God used to do great things had vital relationships with other men? They recognized the need

for each other. They did not try to go it alone. Even Jesus, who was fully God and fully man, recognized the importance of vital relationships.

One of the great benefits of accountability is that you will look at your life more closely than ever before. It will raise your awareness of things that, before, you did not think twice about. Eventually, your actions and behavior will change, as you share your struggles with other men, and pray about them together. You will often be relieved to discover you are not the only one who struggles in a certain area, and together you can learn to overcome it. This is where “iron sharpens iron.”

How Do I Find An Accountability Partner?

Begin by praying that God will reveal to you a guy or a few guys with whom you can explore the possibility of an accountability relationship. Start with the men in your small group or any ministry you may be involved in. (If you are not in a small group, get in one!) Participate in the men’s ministry activities at your church. If there aren’t any, talk with you pastor about starting a men’s breakfast, or a basketball night or something that will bring men together in fellowship.

A good accountability partner candidate is:

- Another guy; not a female—not even your wife. Am I saying you cannot be accountable to your wife, or any other female? No, of course not! You must be accountable to your wife (if you are married.) But there are some things you may not be able to talk about with your wife. Remember: The purpose of these relationships is to help us reach our full potential as men of God.
- Someone you like, and enjoy spending time with.
- A peer; someone who is your “equal,” and who is not impressed with you.
- Someone you respect, and with whom you can build solid

trust. Keep in mind that, over time, you will share many aspects of your life with this guy.

Dear brothers, I cannot say enough about the importance and benefits of developing vital relationships with a few other men. I can tell you this: Once you try it, you will wonder why you waited so long to get started, and your life will never be the same. You will not regret it!

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the day approaching.”—Hebrews 10:25

All scripture quotations are taken from the **New International Version (NIV)** except as noted.

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