

# HOW TO HAVE AN ACCOUNTABLE RELATIONSHIP

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Adapted from *The Man in the Mirror* and *The Seven Seasons of a Man's Life* (Thomas Nelson Publishers)

I played doubles tennis with a partner who always became angry when I netted the ball. Finally, I told him, "Look, give me a break. I would never intentionally hit the ball into the net!" Nobody who trusts Christ with their life intentionally disobeys the scriptures. Men don't fall on purpose. Yet, we see men falling short of their full potential every day the wheels seem to fall off their wagons. Why?

One of the greatest reasons that men get into trouble is that they don't have to answer to anyone for their lives. Ask around. You will learn that very few men have built accountability into their life.

Every day men fail morally, spiritually, relationally, and financially; not because they don't want to succeed, but because of blind spots and weak spots which they think they can handle on their own. They can't.

Some men have spectacular failures in a moment of passion they burst into flames, crash, and burn. More often, men make hundreds of tiny, undetected decisions that slowly, like water tapping on a rock, wear down their character. Not blatantly or precipitously, but subtly, we get caught in a web of cutting corners, compromise, and self-deceit. And no one asks us, "How? Why? What? and Who?" Men fall because they don't have to answer to anyone for their behavior and beliefs.

News, Sports, & Weather ...

Most of our conversations in life revolve around the cliché level news, sports, and weather. But this is the tip of the iceberg the "visible" you. The "real" you wrestles with gut-wrenching issues in the key areas of your life every day, and like me, you need someone to help you navigate around the submerged dangers of an unexamined life.

## **The Purpose and Definition of Accountability**

The purpose of accountability is nothing less than to each day become more Christ-like in all our ways and be ever more intimate with Him. Here's a useful working definition of accountability for Christians:

## **Suggested Guidelines for A Weekly One-Hour Accountability Check-Up**

Try to ensure each person gets equal "air time". However, if one of you has a particularly hard struggle one week, be flexible enough to focus on that issue.

Let each person work through a section at a time, then let the other(s) answer. This will keep things moving.

Don't neglect the prayer time.

Try this in a small group of 3 to 5 men. This will work well if everyone speaks succinctly (one hour will go by very quickly!) You may want to try one-on-one.

Reread the chapter, "Accountability: The Missing Link", from *The Man in the Mirror*, at least once every year and discuss the questions at the end of the chapter. You will be surprised how your understanding of accountability changes over the years.

Stick it out. You will want to quit, perhaps often. Ask God to strengthen you when you want to give up.

Hold each other accountable for the goals you each set for yourselves and to the standards of God's Word.

Never forget the purpose of accountability: To each day become more Christ-like in all of your ways. Remember it is Jesus who is the object of our search, our devotion, our sacrifice, and our affection. Anything less than intimacy with Christ will be a pallid achievement from your time together.

Finally, if you are uncomfortable with the format, feel free to alter these questions and type up your own accountability checklist. The substance is more important than the form. You may want to divide the key areas among more than one accountability partner.

## **Reference Scriptures:**

Proverbs 27:6, 17; Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10; Philippians 2:4, 20; John 13: 34; Galatians 6:1, 2; James 5:16a.

# The Weekly One-Hour Accountability Checkup

## Questions to Start

- How has God blessed you this week? (What went right?)
- What problem has consumed your thoughts this week? (What went wrong?)

## Spiritual Life

- God's Word Have you read it consistently? (How many days? How long? Why not? Will you next week?) What has God been teaching you?
- Prayer Describe your prayers for yourself, for others, praise, confession, gratitude. How is your relationship with Christ evolving?
- Temptation How have you been tempted this week? How did you respond?
- Confession Do you have any unconfessed sin in your life?
- Worship Did you worship in church this week? (Was your faith in Jesus strengthened? Was He honored?)
- Witness Have you shared your faith? In what ways? How can you improve?

## Home Life

- Wife How is it going with your wife? (time, meaningful conversation, attitudes, intimacy, irritations, disappointments, her relationship with Christ)
- Children How is it going with your children? (giving encouragement, quantity and quality time, values, education, spiritual welfare)
- Finances How are your finances doing? (debts, sharing, saving, spending, stewardship)
- Time How have you invested your time around the house?

## Work Life

- Job How are things going? (career progress, relationships, temptations, work load, stress, problems, working too much?)

## Critical Concerns

- God's Will Do you feel you are in the center of God's will? Do you sense His peace?
- Thought Life What are you wrestling with in secret?
- Service What have you done for someone else this week which can't be repaid? (the poor, encouragement, mercy, service to others)
- Priorities Are your priorities in the right order?
- Integrity Is your moral and ethical behavior as it should be?
- High-Risk How are you doing in your personal high-risk area?
- Transparency Is the "visible" you and the "real" you consistent in our relationship? (if not, in what ways?)

## Prayer

Close the one-hour accountability check-up with ten to fifteen minutes of prayer. Focus on concerns of the week.

## Conclusion

I believe no man can stay on track with his God, his family, his friends, his morality, his money, and his vocation unless he has an accountable relationship with other men. The truth for the Biblical Christian is this: There is power in vulnerability, strength in numbers, and safety in visibility.

If you don't have anyone to whom you have given permission to ask how you are really doing, then let me challenge you to fill in this missing link in your life. Take the **"Three Week Accountability Challenge"**:

1. Think of three men who would be good accountability partners for you.
2. Ask each of them to read this article.
3. All four of you make a commitment to meet together for three weeks. If any members don't want to continue after three weeks, find other men to take their place.

A good size for an accountability group is four men. Four men can help each other multiply their strengths and minimize their weaknesses. It is unlikely that four men would all be led astray into the same sin or fail to challenge one of the members on a critical issue. And if one man misses a meeting or drops out, the accountability group can continue.

Are you doing everything you can to guard yourself against the epidemic of falling and failure among men? Make a commitment today to be regularly answerable for each of the key areas of your life to qualified people. It may be the missing piece that helps you to synchronize your behavior with your beliefs and keeps you from spinning out of control.

One more thing. Why not make a copy of "The Weekly One-Hour Accountability Check-up" and keep it in a handy place, like your Bible? Use it the next time you meet with other men.

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Business leader, author, and speaker, Patrick Morley has been used throughout the world to help men and leaders think more deeply about their lives, to be reconciled with Christ, and to equip them to have a larger impact on the world. © 1995. Patrick M. Morley. All rights reserved.