Committed to One-Another

(A Message on Christian Accountability)

(Part 1)

Selected Scriptures

INTRODUCTION:

What is Biblical Accountability? What does it look like?
What does it do?

I. Accountability involves Encouragement
Heb 3:13 – "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

II. Accountability is Reciprocal (Mutual Care for each other) (*Heb 3:13b)*

III. Accountability involves Continual Communication (Heb 3:13c)

IV. Accountability is Necessary to Keeping our Hearts Right with God (*Heb 3:13d)*

V. Accountability Involves Attentive Consideration (Heb. 10:24a)

VI. Accountability Involves Gracious Provocation unto Love & Good Works (Heb. 10:24b)

VII. Biblical Accountability involves Loving Confrontation (Rom. 15:14)

VIII. Accountability involves Humility (James 5:16a)

IX. Accountability involves Righteousness and Prayer (James 5:16b)

X. Accountability involves Genuine Concern for the moral and spiritual well-being of your friend (James 5:19-20)

XI. Accountability involves Truthfulness (Eph 4:15)

XII. Accountability involves Confidentiality (*Proverbs 11:13)*

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INTRODUCTION: (v. 24a)

We know the need of having check-ups. Medical, Dental, Physical Check Ups. To see how we are doing with our health. But have you ever given thought to Spiritual Check Ups?

One of the greatest lacks in churches today is mutual accountability.

Even the world recognizes the need for support groups. Alcoholics Anonymous utilizes the positive force of peer pressure, testing, and accountability to help struggling addicts.

The greatest support group is the local church!

We all need a spiritual friend:

--David had a Jonathan
--He also had a Nathan
--Timothy had a Paul
--Paul had a Barnabas

Why accountability?

--To provide a strong determent to secret sin

--to provide mutual encouragement and prayer support

--To reinforce positive behavior and faithfulness to commitments

--To remind ourselves that we all share the same struggles and that no temptation is the unique experience of any particular person

Obviously , the LORD is the One who keeps the believer faithful; however, one of the ways He works to keep us faithful is through the mutual support and encouragement of other believers. Just as God transmits the Gospel through believers, so He confronts, reminds , lovingly rebukes, teaches, and encourages through believers.

Cain sarcastically said to God: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Gen.4:9)

ILLUS: of a family where all of the family members (brothers and sisters) took care of each other. Contrary to that ideal, families today have become less close, less loving, and less patient.

Contemporary society reflects such self-centeredness quite graphically.
Most people seem to be out for themselves; with their own best interests in mind, living for # 1.

Our church is a family (Eph. 2:18-19), and like a family we need to care for one another.

A Biblical Basis for Accountability:

Ro 12:5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

"Everyone (of us are) members one of another"

We need each other!

"Members" - this word shows the need for commitment to church membership.

No believer is an island unto himself. We need each other!

The dependence of the human body is exemplified by:

Eating -

You depend on your hands to bring the food to your mouth;
you depend on your tongue to tell you if it is too hot, etc.;
you depend on your teeth to chew it up;
your tongue pushes the food back, and you depend on your throat to force it down to your stomach;
you rely on your stomach to digest it with the help of certain acids which come in at just the right time;
your food then passes into the small intestine, where the nutrients are transported to the hungry blood cells which carry the nutrients to various parts of the body to build up muscle tissue, etc.;
then you depend on your large intestine to carry away the waste.
All of the above mentioned functions are essential for a healthy body, and all of the bodily operations work because of the brain.

Just as no part of your human body exists for itself, but for the assistance of some other bodily function, so no part of the Body of Christ is to exist selfishly for itself.

Example of my obligations as the oldest brother to my brothers and sister while growing up.

Salvation in Christ unites us to a new family. The church is a family.

What is Biblical Accountability? What does it look like? What does it do?

I. Accountability involves <u>Encouragement</u>

Heb 3:13 – "But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

"Exhort" - *(parakaleo)* to encourage. The Encourager (the Holy Spirit) uses human vessels to encourage His people.

All of us need our faith encouraged. We all need a Barnabas in our life.

We are to be <u>encouragers</u>!

Every Christian is to lift up those who fall, strengthen the weak, etc.

--We are to <u>comfort</u> those who are distressed
(II Cor. 1:3-4 - "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.")

--We are to <u>repair</u> (mend) those who are broken by sin (Gal. 6:1-2 - "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.")

--We are to <u>convert</u> those who stray from the truth - (James 5:19-20 - "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.")

II. Accountability is <u>Reciprocal (Mutual Care for each other)</u> (*Heb 3:13b)*

"One another" **-** emphasizes the reciprocal nature of the encouraging (Mutual encouragement).

We need to genuinely take care of each other in the family of God!
How should we take care of each other?

See: The "One-Anothers" of Romans

I. **<u>BE MEMBERS</u> with one another (Rom.12:4-5)**
(A plea to <u>contribute our gift</u> to each other)

II. **<u>HONOR</u> one another (12:10)**
(A plea to <u>show family honor</u> to each other)

III. **<u>LOVE</u> one another (13:8)**
(A plea to <u>pay the debt of love</u> to each other)

IV. **<u>EDIFY</u> one another (14:13,19)**
(A plea to <u>be a stepping stone, not a stumbling block</u> to each other)

V. **<u>BEAR</u> with one another (15:1)**
(A plea for <u>patience</u> toward each other)

VI. **<u>PLEASE</u> one another (15:2-4)**
(A plea for <u>unselfishness</u> toward each other)

VII. **<u>UNITE</u> with one another (15:5-6)**
(A plea for <u>oneness</u> with each other)

VIII. **<u>ACCEPT</u> one another (15:7)**
(A plea for <u>impartiality</u> toward each other)

IX. **<u>ADMONISH</u> one another (15:14)**
(A plea for <u>loving confrontation</u> with each other)

We need each other (we are in a sense mutually dependent).

If you fail to gather with God's people, you will simply fail.

III. Accountability involves <u>Continual Communication</u> (Heb 3:13c)

***"Daily"* -** Emphasizes the continual need for encouragement (not just once a week or once a year).

Perhaps we cannot gather all together every day of the week, but you can. . .

--use the phone
--visit a friend from church
--mail a card

This idea of encouraging each other is most clearly stated in Heb. 10:24-25.

ILLUS: the coals in the fireplace

IV. Accountability is <u>Necessary</u> to Keeping our Hearts Right with God (*Heb 3:13d)*

Beware of the hardening effects of sin (v. 13b)

We provoke each other unto love and good works so as to live holy and Godly. Such provocation helps us to sin less and to keep our hearts soft.

***"Hardened"* -** sin has a hardening effect on our hearts.

--It hardens us against loving God and others (Mt. 24:12)

--It hardens us against obeying God

Hard-hearted people are too stubborn to accept God's will; they want their own.

EX: *"Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives. . ."* (Mt. 19:8)

Every time you give in to a sin, you become more and more calloused to it, more and more insensitive to its abhorrent nature, less and less afraid of its damaging effects.

***"Deceitfulness"* -** Sin says, "You can flirt with me and not be hurt." "You can from time to time dabble around with me and not be affected."

Use the ILLUSTRATION of "Plastic Steel" putty (when the two elements are mixed, the catalyst of one hardens the other).

The condition of your heart will determine your reception of the seed of God's Word (Matthew 13 - the four soils).

--Cement is workable when soft
--Clay is moldable when soft
--Plaster/compound is pliable when soft
--Bonds Plastic Filler is useful when soft

If God is going to alter/grow/mature anything in our lives, we must have tender hearts.

Have you grown insensitive to the "*still small voice"* of God?

Has your reception become calloused?

Are you as easily moved (touched), affected by God's Word as you used to be?

If not, it may be time to ask God to tenderize your heart once again.

V. Accountability Involves Attentive <u>Consideration</u> (Heb. 10:24a)

Heb 10:24 – "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works"

"Let us" - a <u>rousing exhortation</u> (Greek - a hortatory subjunctive).

"Consider" = to <u>pay careful attention</u> to one another; to <u>focus our thoughts</u> on the needs of others; to take <u>interest</u> in one another; being <u>thoughtful</u> or <u>considerate</u> of others is the idea.

In context, what type of "consideration" would the Hebrew Christians need to have toward each other? Answer: To not allow their brother Christians to draw back into Judaism!

"One another" = shows the reciprocal nature of the consideration. Showing consideration or being thoughtful is not a one-way street. It is our mutual obligation.

As not "Who is being considerate of me?" but "Whom am I being considerate of?"

"Whose need am I focusing my thoughts on? Who am I empathizing with? To whom am I sharing thoughtful words or extending thoughtful deeds?"

How often we tend to be caught up with our own problems and needs and become inconsiderate of others.

VI. Accountability Involves Gracious Provocation unto Love & Good Works
(Heb. 10:24b)

"To provoke" - a strong word, meaning to incite (EX; of a mob); to spur on (EX: of a horse); to stimulate a response; to stir up to action; to irritate; to push someone or practically compel them into doing something.

"Provoke" - The Greek word is used in Acts 15:39 to speak of a sharp contention; in Acts 17:16 of a heart-wrenching stirring; in Eph. 6:4 of a father provoking his son.

ILLUS: How there were times when John Deseno (my bus captain) would irritate me with his concern and Saturday visits, yet it paid off! And I today thank him for loving me enough to keep after me.

I used to have the attitude: "I don't want to be a bother to them." "So what if "so and so" has missed church for one year, I'll let God convict him/her about it."

Then it dawned on me that perhaps I just might be the tool God uses to bring conviction to him/her.

The biggest disservice we could ever do toward each other is to never care enough to say: "Brother, I'm concerned about you, we've missed you at church . . . etc.

"Love and good works" do not come "naturally." We all continually rely on each other's encouragement, rebuke, and concern to demonstrate such virtues.

NOTE: The word order is not "good works and love" but "love and good works." Why? Because good works flow out of an attitude of love. Love is the motivation to good works.

"To love" - an agape love toward God and man (Mt. 22:37-39); having such love will fulfill every law! (v. 40 - cp. Rom. 13:8 ["Owe no man anything, but to love on another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law"]; and Gal. 5:14 ["For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"]).

"Good works" would include any positive action as directed by the law of Christ (which is the law of love).

One main reason God saved you is that you might do good works (Eph. 2:10; Mt. 5:16; cp. I Pet. 2:12).

Basically, to provoke others unto "good works" is to provoke them to Christ-likeness, because good works were the undeniable trademark of Christ's ministry.

True love may confront and love may rebuke, but true love never neglects.

--Passive Christianity is unbiblical!
--Laissez faire ("hands off") Christianity is sin!
--Being an isolationist, or spiritual hermit or monk is a violation of Heb. 10:24

VII. Biblical Accountability involves Loving Confrontation

Ro 15:14 - And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

ADMONISH one another *(A plea for loving confrontation with each other)*

"Admonish" - noutheteo - lit. to put into the mind; to confront one's thinking.

A pastor's job is to admonish the flock so that they think Biblically (I Th. 5:12).

As a man thinks, so is he.
"You are what you think."

The way you think and what you think affects every area of your life. Your thoughts affect your emotions and your actions. Hence, Bible teaching is essential to emotional stability and Godly conduct.

The word "admonish" is used in the sense of: 1)To rebuke and 2) To instruct

"Admonish one another" - The admonishing is not only the pastor's responsibility and privilege but is expected of the laymen to be involved in reciprocal admonition. In the family of God we need to verbally encourage each other.

"Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of a friend" - Prov. 27:17

Prov. 27:6 - "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful."

VIII. Accountability involves Humility (James 5:16a)

Jas 5:16 – "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed…"

In order for us to go to each other and to encourage others to come to us:

We need humility (to confess our sins)

"Confess" = be open. Admit specific areas of sin (ex. thought life, tongue, attitude, sinful habits)

It does not only mean to confess to one you have sinned against; but admit to those you can share confidences with. Share the areas you stumble in so that you can be prayed for!

This does not mean confession in a public worship service. He says it is to be to "one another" privately.

We don't do this because we are proud.
IF we would do this, we would have:
1) specific prayer support
2) encouragement and accountability
3) a powerful deterrent to sin

NOTE: James does not say: "Confess your sins to a priest in a confessional booth" but to one another (we are all priests!)

IX. Accountability involves Righteousness and Prayer (James 5:16b)

You cannot have real influence apart from righteousness; And you cannot provoke righteousness, if you yourself are not.

We need righteousness to have power in prayer (v. 16b-18)
(Be one who has godly character)

V. 16 lit. - "The effective (energized) prayer (request) of a righteous one is strong to do much" (it is very powerful!)

"The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their prayer" (I Pet. 3:12)

X. **Accountability involves <u>Genuine Concern</u>** for the moral and spiritual well-being of your friend (James 5:19-20)

We need <u>concern</u> (to restore an erring brother)
(Be one who is really concerned)

"Of you" = Lit. "in you" (in your midst; in your church, among you)

"Err" = to wander away from living the truth.

In context, an <u>ethical</u>, rather than doctrinal, wandering is primarily in view.

Gal. 6:1 - "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

If he listens, we have gained (won) our brother (Mt. 18:15).

Churches around the world would easily double or triple in size (without winning one new soul) if we practiced this.

1. Such concern <u>saves lives</u> (v. 20a)

"Converteth" = to <u>turn</u> a person <u>around</u>. Same word used of Peter (Lk. 22:32).

"Sinner" = one who misses the mark. He is not living up to what God commands.

"Save a soul from death" = deliver a life from physical death.

Christian, if there is sin in your life, it will kill you! (ex. Ananias and Sapphira)

Sin always leads to death! "Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death" (See Ja. 1:15-16: L.S.D. ----
Lust ---- Sin ---- Death)

"Chastening" - Heb. 12

"One sinner destroyeth much good" (Eccles. 9:18)

2.Such concern <u>stops sin</u> (v. 20b)

"Hide" = cover

"Hate stirreth up strife: but love covereth all sins" (Prov. 10:12).

This does not mean that love "sweeps the dirt under the carpet." Where there is love, there must be truth and righteousness!

Love will seek to get the sin covered under the blood!

By turning the sinner around, you are making sure that:

1) the sinful lifestyle stops
2) the sin is no longer publicized to the hurt of
   the church body (sin in a sense is contagious-
   it spreads)
3) the sin is covered by the blood (I Jn. 1:9)

True love seeks to cover sin (God's way). ILLUS: Noah's two sons walked in backwards to cover their father's nakedness.

We are disgusted when we hear of a rape or murder in which everyone just stood around and did not get involved. Are we any better?

When you know of a brother in sin, and you do nothing about it -- you then have sinned! We must also not be content with just admonishing him one time and think: "My work is done." What if, before you were saved, God said, "He heard the gospel once--that is enough."?

XI. Accountability involves <u>Truthfulness</u> (Eph 4:15)

Eph 4:15 "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ"

We cannot have accountability apart from truth. Being honest with each other is an obvious prerequisite to Biblical accountability.

A fear of God is the key to being truthful. Knowing the consequences of lying is a strong deterrent to lying. (Rev. 21:8)

XII. Accountability involves <u>Confidentiality</u>

Proverbs 11:13 - A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.

Our policy should always be: "I will never share anything with anyone that I do not need to share" (that does not concern them; that is none of their business)

Conclusion:

Sample Accountability Questions:

Iron Sharpeneth Iron

Accountability Checklist:

How much time did you spend in prayer this week?

Did you read God's Word this week? What did God show you?

Did you accomplish your spiritual goals this week?

How have you demonstrated a servant's heart?
(What have you done for someone else this week?)

What was your biggest disappointment? How did you decide to handle it?

What significant thing did you do for your wife and/or family this week?

What was your biggest joy? Did you thank God for it?

What steps did you take to guide your family?

Who did you last share your faith with? What happened?

When did you last view something inappropriate? Did you just lie to me?

- Have you spent time with God on a regular basis?
- Have you compromised your integrity in any way?
- Has your thought life been pure?
- Have you committed any sexual sin?
- How much time did you spend in prayer this week?
- Did you pray for the others in this group?
- Did you put yourself in an awkward situation with a woman?
- What one sin plagued your walk with God this week?
- Did you accomplish your spiritual goals this week?
- Are you giving to the Lord's work financially?
- How have you demonstrated a servant's heart?
- Do you treat your peers and coworkers as people loved by God?
- What significant thing did you do for your wife and/or family?
- What was your biggest disappointment? How did you decide to handle it?
- What was your biggest joy? Did you thank God?
- What do you see as your number one need for next week?
- Are you satisfied with the time you spent with the Lord this week?
- Did you take time to show compassion for others in need?
- Did you control your tongue?
- What did you do this week to enhance your relationship with your spouse and/or child(ren)?
- Did you pray and read God's Word this week? What did you derive from this time?
- What ways have you stepped out in faith since we last met?
- What ways has God blessed you this week? And what disappointments consumed your thoughts this week?
- Did you look at a woman in the wrong way?
- How have you been tempted this week? How did you respond?
- How has your relationship with Christ been changing?
- Did you worship in church this week?
- Have you shared your faith this week? How?
- What are you wrestling with in your thought life?
- What have you done for someone else this week?
- Are the "visible" you and the "real" you consistent?

Accountability Questions (from Scott Berry)

1. Are you setting aside time for personal devotions?
2. Are you having family devotions?
3. Are you praying with your wife?
4. Are you praying with your children?
5. Are you spending time watching TV?
6. Are you avoiding questionable and/or pornographic internet sites?
7. Are you using a filter on your computer?
8. Are you using time to pursue God's will and goals for your life?
9. Are you watching your food consumption?
10. Are you setting aside time to exercise?
11. Do you need help?
12. Do you need encouragement?