

Accountability: A Discipline for Spiritual Growth

When one becomes a Christ-follower she can and should embark on an incredible journey into Christlikeness. We are not saved for birth but for usefulness to the Father. This journey will be marked by many changes as we are being conformed to His character. Some of the more significant changes will be: (1) moving from selfishness to selflessness (see Philippians 2:3-4), (2) moving from being prideful to humble (James 5:16), and (3) moving from independence to interdependence (I Corinthians 12: 12-27)

This journey from independence to interdependence is made with other people that the Holy Spirit will bring into our lives or use who we already have relationship with. A tenet of our faith is: We need each other. The Christian life was never intended to be lived apart from the encouragement and help of others. That is why the local church is so important (See Hebrews 10: 24-25). Some of these people will play relatively minor roles in our lives for a specified amount of time while the Holy Spirit will use others in a major way to help shape us into the character of Christ Jesus.

A major role that another can play in our spiritual journey is that of being an *accountability partner*. An accountability relationship is a partnership in which two people covenant together to look out for each other's spiritual and holistic welfare with permission to ask personal and sometimes probing questions (see Proverbs 27:6). The purpose is to invite someone into your life who will help you in your desire to become spiritually mature. Such a relationship should not be entered into lightly or without knowledge that the process while invaluable rewarding can also be painful.

Who are the type people who make good accountability partners and how can you find them? I want to offer a few observations that may help you in deciding who such a person might be in your life. First, your accountability partner should be someone of the same gender. Second, the person should ideally be a peer and someone you enjoy being with and respect. Third, you should choose one whom you can depend on. Fourth, an accountability partner should also desire such a relationship. It is a reciprocal arrangement. Fifth, the person will be one whom you can pray with and for. How can you find such a person? The most important thing to do in finding such a person is to ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to the person that is best for you. That is important because the most logical choice is not always the best person to assist you in your quest for spiritual maturity. Believe that God wants you to have such a person in your life more than you want it. He will not lead you to the wrong person.

While the details of the partnership will be worked out by the two involved, I want to suggest some questions that might be helpful in determining the types of things you will be accountable for and ask each other about:

1. Have you spent significant time with God in Bible study, prayer, Scripture memory, a quiet time, etc.?
2. Have you been a part of life in the church in the last week? If not, why?
3. Have you been faithful to talk about your faith experience at appropriate times?
4. Have you compromised sexual purity in your relationships, in what you look at, in how you dress?
5. Have you been a good steward of your time, money, and responsibilities?
6. Have you insisted in having your own way?
7. Are you angry at another person or harbor ill-will?
8. Have you exhibited a jealous or prideful spirit?
9. Have you talked about someone in a negative way?
10. Have you confessed all known sin in your life?

This is not an exhaustive list of questions. As stated above, partners will determine the areas they desire to be accountable, but remember, the purpose is to become like Jesus in character. Believe that being a part of such a partnership can be a significant step in your spiritual growth and believe that the Holy Spirit will direct the journey if you ask Him to.