

How to Live Accountable Lives

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Andrew and Elizabeth East serve on the eldership team in Joshua Generation Church and Elizabeth has contributed this article on accountability out of her wealth of experience in this area gained from her private practice in counselling.

In the [#BeEquipped](#) video, “[Don’t Judge Me](#)”, Shaun Brauteseth and Ryan Kingsley unpacked the topic and application of accountability anchored in the Word. Over the years, I have had the privilege of helping leaders who have fallen in sin and seeing them come into freedom and healing. It’s been a tough and painful journey of accountability as they have allowed God to reveal what is in the depths of their hearts and how these attitudes and idols first took root. It has also made me more fully comprehend the importance of accountability and question whether we genuinely understand this term and live in its fullness.

In this article, we take a closer look at living accountable lives and what this looks like on a daily basis. We explore the need for building honest, transparent relationships grounded in genuine love, finding intentional and tenacious accountability partners, and how being self-aware and reflective can set our hearts even more on fire for Jesus.

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Accountability as a Way of Life

We need to live in such a way that accountability is a way of life, even as we live in community together. I found this definition of church accountability: ‘... the goal (of accountability) is to help people grow in Christ and to learn to find Him as the source, force and course of life.’ [1](#)

It is not about concentrating on sin or flaws per se. Ideally, it is an overflow of friendship, confidently sharing our lives – warts and all – with trust and vulnerability on both sides. Why? So that the other will be more like Jesus! It’s a freeing thing – to know and be known and still to be

loved. It is a real-life demonstration of how Jesus loves us in grace and truth. It is the church at its best!

“A new command I give to you. As I have loved you, so you must love one another; by this will all men know you are my disciples, if you love one another.” – John 13:34-35 (NIV). It is absolutely simple, yet goes against our culture and old, fallen nature.

Martin Luther said: *‘Under every behavioural sin is the sin of idolatry’*. It can be said then that it is through our conversations that behaviours may be noticed that reveal idols hidden in the deep recesses of our hearts. This comes from a relationship of trust, where grace and truth flow as we challenge each other, resulting in much gratitude. Ephesians 4:15 (NIV) says: *“speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him, who is the head, that is Christ.”*

Ask the Right Questions

This truth has made me look more intently at our conversations, the questions we ask each other and the depth to which we commune. When we have people in our home, we try not to always talk about ‘work’ but instead encourage people around our table to share who they are and their story. It has revealed things about people that those who have known them for years didn’t know. It gives us an insight into the real us.

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Recently, a client was bemoaning the fact that his accountability structure wasn’t working to help him break free. On closer questioning, he revealed that his accountability partners never asked him deep, personal questions and only addressed the issue of porn if he brought it up. No wonder it wasn’t working!

Be Intentional & Tenacious

There are times when we have to be accountable around a specific issue with people. If someone has asked you to be an accountability partner to help them overcome a particular issue of sin, like a pornography addiction or other sinful behaviour, you need to be tenacious and keep asking the hard and intentional questions. Agree together on the specific questions to ask that will delve deep into the person’s life, not just behaviour, and keep asking them, again and again!

We need to be tenacious people who follow up on each other; friends who remember what we have been told before; people who genuinely love the other. I remember visiting a young couple to ask a few hard questions about something that we had picked up around the dinner table: a decision of partnering with someone who may not have done them good. Why were we there late at night asking awkward questions? Because we loved them dearly and saw what God had for their future. That conversation, along with others, has created a deep connection of love and trust.

Accountability Questions

Sexual Purity

For someone battling with sexual purity, we may need to ask questions like:

- How are your times with God – what is He saying?
- Have you taken a ‘second look’ at another woman this week?
- Have you looked at porn in any form?
- How is your relationship with your wife?
- How are you managing your stress and emotions?
- Are you choosing healthy options?

Boundaries

For boundary struggles, one could ask:

- What has God been saying to you? Is there freshness in your times with Him?
- When did you last feel resentful/angry? Tell me some other strong emotions you have felt and why.
- Have you kept to your agreed structure/disciplines?
- Have you looked after yourself? (E.g. healthy eating, exercise, time for yourself and friends?)
- Since the last time we spoke, have you allowed your boundaries to be crossed? How?
- Is your self-talk negative or positive?

Creating trusting, transparent relationships allows for the to and fro of thoughts, doubts and triumphs. It makes us feel safe.

We can help each other by picking up when the other is only slightly faulty in their faith or belief system. If left unchecked or unnoticed, this slight deviation could lead to them going more and more off-centre. In his review of the book ‘Doubting Towards Faith’ by Bobby Conway, Sean McDowell says: *“Doubts don’t have to be the end of faith ... they can be the impetus for the development of a deeper, more genuine faith ... don’t doubt alone. Share your doubts with others. When you are in the middle of doubting, it is critical to experience the love, grace and guidance of the body of Christ. Doubting alone is a recipe for disaster.”*

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Self-Awareness Questions

Another aspect of being accountable is the desire for vulnerability and to be more self-aware. Self-awareness is vital in our journey to becoming more like Jesus, and it mostly comes by being known through living in community and accountability.

I often suggest to my clients that they **ask three friends the following questions:**

- How do you see me?
- Name five strengths?
- What areas do I need to work on?
- What would you change about me?
- What do you see that I don't see myself?

([Here](#) is a short video you can view as part of the Headstrong series that provides more detail on how to be more self-aware.)

This is true accountability: the mirror being held up to reflect ourselves showing all the good and the bad.

'Holy Club' Questions

John Wesley, the great revivalist, gathered a group together called the Holy Club. They were passionate about radically loving and serving Jesus. He encouraged them to ask these questions of themselves and each other on a daily basis:

- Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?
- Am I honest in all my acts and words, or do I exaggerate?
- Do I confidentially pass on to another what was told to me in confidence?
- Can I be trusted?
- Am I a slave to dress, friends, work, or habits?
- Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?
- Did the Bible live in me today?
- Do I give it (the Bible) time to speak to me every day?
- Am I enjoying prayer?

- When did I last speak to someone else about my faith?
- Do I pray about the money I spend?
- Do I get to bed on time and get up on time? (Did I make my bed?)
- Do I disobey God in anything?
- Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?
- Am I defeated in any part of my life?
- Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy, or distrustful?
- How do I spend my spare time?
- Am I proud?
- Do I thank God that I am not as other people, especially as the Pharisees who despised the publican?
- Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold a resentment toward or disregard? If so, what am I doing about it?
- Do I grumble or complain constantly?
- Is Christ real to me?

Keeping Our Hearts Ablaze

These questions were not about changing behaviour or uncovering sin but rather about keeping hearts on fire for Jesus and His people. As John Wesley famously quoted: *"I just set myself on fire and people come to watch me burn"*.

We can't live this life alone. God has given us church family – friends who can walk alongside us. There are also those in the church who need friends to walk alongside them! May we continue to daily look to Christ and live intentionally with vulnerability and humility, asking others to speak into our lives and call us to account. May we be that friend who loves deeply, speaks honestly and is tenacious on behalf of our brothers and sisters.

[1] Marks of Maturity: [Biblical Characteristics of a Christian Leader](#)