

# Practice of Accountability

Or “the art of Christian feedback”



Accountability –noun

1.the quality or state of being accountable;  
*especially* : an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions

The word “accountability” is surrounded by negative connotations. All too often it brings to mind images of rules, regulations and men with clipboards ready to audit our every move. But we don't have to worry. That isn't accountability in the Christian sense.

## Christian accountability

God doesn't call us to be solitary Christians – he wants us to be part of a community (1Cor12:12-31). Accountability should be part of the glue that binds the body of Christ together – although it can be hard to see it that way if we view accountability through the eyes of legalism. It is not a burden – rather an expression of our trust and encouragement.

## Accountability: “a count (on me) ability”

“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 10:24,25

- If we open ourselves up to the eyes of our brothers and sisters in Christ we risk much – but in that act of submission we have even more to gain.

“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.”  
Galatians 6:1,2

- Psalm 23 famously states how the Lord restores our souls, similarly we too are called to *gently* restore one another.

“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.”  
Matthew 7:3-5

- Note that Jesus doesn't tell us not to remove the speck from out of our brother's eye – only to make sure that we've first dealt with the plank in our own. Mutual accountability should be what's making us aware of the planks in our eyes. By submitting to the flashlight of accountability ourselves – we can deal with the things keeping us from growing and in our growth mutually help the very people who helped us in the first place.

## **The “compassionate circle” of accountability**

Just as egocentricity can lead to a vicious circle of mistrust, so openness and vulnerability can lead to a “compassionate circle” of accountability. This can be counter to all that society and indeed, our own ego tells us to do. It requires trust and faith – in both God and in our fellow Christians – and a large dose of something only God can provide – grace. Ultimately entering in to an accountability relationship with other requires a Christian act of submission.

### **Why be accountable?**

- It’s helpful – if we know that we’re accountable to another it can help “keep us on our toes”
- It’s insightful – sometimes we just don’t know we’re going wrong. Unless another points out we’re going in the wrong direction – we’ll often just keep heading that way.
- It’s “inspirational” – often Christians – particularly those in leadership roles – can be seen by others as infallible towers of virtue. By making themselves accountable – to each other, to their churches, and to the wider communities they wish to serve, God can turn their weaknesses into his opportunities. See 2 Corinthians 12
- The Bible calls for us to be accountable to one another and in doing so “obey the law of Christ”. See Galatians 6:2

### **Key elements of accountability**

- Trust
- Openness
- Compassion
- Risk
- Community
- Submission