



# Understanding the Place and Power of a Spiritual Accountability Partner

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## I. THE NATURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

**DEFINITION:** Accountability is the volunteer surrender of all aspects of your life to the regular and frequent scrutiny and encouragement of another person for the purpose of ongoing transformation that brings glory to God and a healthier, balanced life.

Accountability is...

- ❖ The commitment to come along side your friend to help them progress in their spiritual journey.
- ❖ Holding your friend responsible to the personal and spiritual changes that need to be made.
- ❖ Challenging them toward their God-honoring goals for growth and in the right direction for their life and marriage.
- ❖ A complete willingness to humbly and willingly submit to the questions, concerns and support of your spiritual accountability partner.

## II. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SPIRITUAL ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNER

**GENUINE FRIENDSHIP:** A spiritual accountability partner (SAP) truly cares for their friend. As Christians, we are to “bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). That law of Christ is love. As a SAP, you love your friend at the deepest level. They trust their life to you: who they are, what they are facing and who they desire to become. You will love them through your sincerity and directness, through attention to the details and through your consistency.

**SERIOUS BATTLE:** Breaking free and overcoming personal issues and rising above our own sin and selfishness through God’s help are hard things. You are coming along side to help pull them out of the mire of any unhealthy distraction. “If someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore them gently” (Gal. 6:1). Where issues are more complicated or difficult to handle, your friend needs you to hold him accountable on the direction he wants to go with his life – God’s way. He wants freedom, integrity and respect again. You are fighting for his soul – overcoming some of our hurdles and habits will be war – remember, “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:12).

**SPIRITUAL JOURNEY:** Remember – it is God who changes lives. He will need to be the central and active partner in the process of transforming accountability. Sheer will and determination won't work. "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free. When the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:32,36). Jesus alone makes the changes – He can set them free. As a SAP, you will need to pray for and with your friend regularly. It is the Lord who needs to bring both strength and perspective. Ask Him to lead you as you encourage and guide your friend through the issues they are facing.

### III. THE BIBILCAL MANDATE FOR ACCOUNTABILITY IN LIFE

The spiritual principle of coming along side another person to encourage them through life's journey in both the delightful and difficult times is all over Scripture. Your desire is for their ongoing spiritual growth in all aspects of life. The role of a SAP is to bring encouragement, perspective, admonition and prayer. Read the verses below to gain insight noting especially the bold words.

- James 5:16- "Therefore **confess your sins** to each other and **pray for each other** so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."
- Romans 1:11,12- "I long to see you so that I may **impart to you some spiritual gift** to make you strong— that is, that you and I may be **mutually encouraged** by each other's faith."
- Romans 15:1,2- "We who are strong ought to **bear with the failings** of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to **build them up**."
- Galatians 6:1,2- "Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should **restore that person gently**. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. **Carry each other's burdens**, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."
- Hebrews 3:12,13- "See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, **unbelieving heart that turns away** from the living God. But **encourage one another daily**, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be **hardened by sin's deceitfulness**."
- James 5:19, 20- "My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and **someone should bring him back**, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner **away from his error** will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins."

- 1 Thess. 5:11- "Therefore **encourage one another** and **build each other up**, just as in fact you are doing."
- Proverbs 17:17- "A friend loves at **all times**, and a brother is born for **a time of adversity**."
- Proverbs 27:6- "**Wounds from a friend can be trusted**."
- Proverbs 27:10- "The pleasantness of one's friend springs from his **earnest counsel**."
- Proverbs 27:17- "As iron sharpens iron, so one person **sharpens another**."
- Proverbs 18:24- "One who has unreliable friends soon **comes to ruin**, but there is **a friend who sticks closer** than a brother."
- Ecclesiastes 4:9,10,12- "**Two are better than one**, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can **help the other up**. But **pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up**. Though one may be overpowered, **two can defend themselves**. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

#### **Biblical Wisdom For Those Being Held Accountable by Another:**

- Proverbs 13:10- "Wisdom is found in those who **take advice**."
- Proverbs 17:10- "A **rebuke** impresses a man of discernment more than one hundred lashes a fool."
- Proverbs 9:8,9- "**Rebuke** a wise man and he will love you. **Instruct** a wise man and he will be wiser still; **teach** a righteous man and he will add to his learning."
- Proverbs 19:20 – "**Listen to advice and accept instruction** and in the end you will be wise."
- Proverbs 15:31- "He who **listens to a life-giving rebuke** will be at home among the wise."

#### **IV. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF ACCOUNTABILITY?**

1. You take your "garbage" out each week– dealing with closet items of the past as well as dealing with current issues of sin and struggle.
2. You get each other's perspective and balance on current problems.

3. You share your hurts and get support through the tough times.
4. You become a consistent challenge to personal and spiritual growth.
5. Accountability keeps you focused on the future – what do you do next? What is my “Ultimate Scenario”? What does God want for me?
6. Your family issues are dealt regularly with, as relational fractures are resolved.
7. You feel one step closer to God and more motivated to follow Him.

## V. HOW TO SELECT A SPIRITUAL ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNER

There are a number of responsibilities that the SAP will need to carry for their friend. It will involve commitment over the long haul. The more of these qualities that exist, the better the accountability will be. This being said, it is better to HAVE a SAP than to wait for a “perfect “ one.

1. **Accessibility:** Available by phone, email, text and face-to-face.
2. **Confidentiality:** Trustworthy and private on the deepest and darkest battles.
3. **Reliability:** Faithful to care through calls, questions and coaching.
4. **Tenacity:** Willing to boldly ask the hard questions and use tough love.
5. **Respectability:** Has spousal endorsement to serve as advocate and SAP.
6. **Spirituality:** Able to pray with and speak God's truth into the person's life.

## VI. THE ROLE OF THE SPIRITUAL ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNER

1. Be willing and faithful to discuss and then hold your friend accountable on all issues of life including growth and maturity in the both marital and spiritual domains through consistent questions and support.
2. Be aware that as the SAP, you are freeing your friend's spouse to be the friend not the one who checks up on them all the time.
3. Meet regularly as discussed. Phone or text regularly as required. Be on call for crisis encouragement.

4. Be prepared to work through the attached list of accountability questions.

## **VII. WHAT IS THE SPIRIT OF ACCOUNTABILITY?**

1. Both must want to keep God first in their lives and do what it takes to keep Him there.
2. Both must be willing to push and be pushed to assist the other in sticking with their commitments to God, their families and others.
3. Both must volunteer their fears, failings and frustrations of the week knowing that it only works if both are truly open.

## **VIII. WHY ACCOUNTABILITY WORKS?**

1. Accountability can lead to friendship but isn't based on being good friends. It is based on affinity and commitment to mutually want to grow. A deepening trust comes in time.
2. You can have no masks as you must be open, real and choose to be transparent.
3. You have to engage, to share and to wrestle through the issues of your lives.
4. You have to believe in the importance of accountability.
5. You have to believe that God is in the middle of the process – invite Him to be.
6. You have to maintain complete trustworthiness and have no concerns regarding confidentiality.
7. You experience in a true sense that “my SAP has my back”. Though there may be straight talk, there is never a sense of judgment or disrespect. He is my advocate.

## **IX. WHAT IS DONE DURING ACCOUNTABILITY?**

1. Discuss what's going on in your life
  - Free to bellyache – unload your hurts, frustrations, screw-ups, setbacks
  - Free to brag – share your wins, successes, highlights
  - Talk out your emotions – how life is affecting you?

2. Work through the Accountability Questions at least twice per year.
3. Share what you are learning:
  - Bible reading
  - Book reading – bring stuff to the table we've found
  - Seminar or sermon highlights
4. Check out all your primary relationships:
  - Spouse
  - Family
  - Work
  - Friend
5. Analyze how you spend your time:
  - Balance of Schedules
  - Review/re-establish our focus – 2° off True North
6. Interact on the Issues that have surfaced that week:
  - Encourage and affirm
  - Challenge and correct
  - Strategize and adjust
7. Pray for and seek God-ordained appointments to touch other's lives:
  - Ask God to lead you to those you need to encourage
  - Be open for whom to give a word of witness to.
  - Make a difference in someone's life each week
8. Spend time Praying for each other about your real needs.

## **X. PRINCIPLES OF ACCOUNTABILITY**

1. Determine the frequency, the day and the time you will meet – be consistent.
2. Decide the best location where privacy and freedom to share isn't compromised.
3. While eating together is good, the focus can't be the food or be in a public setting.
4. Choose to be vulnerable. You must willingly make transparency your goal.
5. Share the highlights of your week. Volunteer both your ups and downs in all areas. Do NOT wait to be questioned on the right issue to disclose on it.
6. Ask about primary relationships, vocational concerns and spiritual disciplines.
7. Weekly check-up – ask the questions.

8. Share from the Word, highlights of your week's study.
9. Share from collateral reading, devotional guides, messages received.
10. Be sure to report back on issues to correct or relationships to restore.
11. Work hard to honestly take your garbage out each week – confess all sin.
12. Share prayer requests and pray for each other's needs, concerns and opportunities.
13. Practice Good gossip: If you talk positively about someone together, you must share that same encouragement with the actual person within 24 hours.

## **XI. WEEKLY QUESTIONS TO TACKLE:**

1. Spiritual Disciplines: Bible reading, prayer and any other practices agreed on.
2. Acknowledge the condition of your marriage and all the ups and downs.
3. Disclose on the nature of your week with your immediate family.
4. Recognize and discuss the temptations faced in all areas that week.
5. Share on the personal, emotional and spiritual problems you are struggling with. Where do you know you have blown it this week?
6. Have you asked God this week to lead you to a person that would be his appointment for you?