

Equipping Thoughts for Leaders



February 24th, 2021

Four Essential Steps for Leaders to Live in Accountability

COVID-19 has locked people down in their homes with others, but it has also locked them down with patterns of sin that seek to destroy them. We have seen evidence of this with spiritual leaders. Consider some public headlines reporting on church leadership scandals during this past season.

- **Mega church pastor resigns over a swirl of accusations.**
- **CEO of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee confesses to ‘Morally inappropriate relationships.’**
- **Mega church leader fired after 16 years due to alcoholism and divorce starts a new church.**
- **The rise and fall of Carl Lentz, the celebrity pastor.**
- **Ravi Zacharias, Influential Evangelist, Is Accused of Sexual Abuse in Scathing Report.**
- **Jerry Falwell’s Aides Break Their Silence: ‘Someone’s Gotta Tell the Freakin’ Truth’**
- **Almost 1,700 priests and clergy accused of sex abuse.**
- **Another Hillsong’s leader leads a hidden life.**

It is easy to highlight the headlines of well-known celebrity types, but what about the countless other relatively unknown leaders who have fallen or are deeply involved in hidden sins. I recently was made aware of a couple of them through friends. It is so sad because in both cases they are accountable to no one

I don't bring these examples up to discourage us but to encourage leaders to pursue purity and deliverance. I have noticed a trend in leadership, both in the Bible and over the 43 years I have served Jesus. Exposures like these tend to run in cycles. Jesus seems to move to cleanse His house of leaders who will not walk in the light and hold onto sins in secret. Jesus said, "that which is said in the dark will be shouted from the rooftops" (Luke 12:3). It is the Lord bringing light to drive out the bondage of darkness.

There is a God-designed need in all of us to walk in trust and security that comes through God-ordained leaders who have integrity. When leaders fall, it shatters that trust and creates insecurity. Cynicism stands knocking on our door to come in and destroy the precious things of God like "Faith, Hope, and Love" (1 Corinthians 13:1-13).

An Important Key to Continuing and Finishing Well

Often, leaders seek instruction on launching their ministry or becoming more "successful." Leaders also need to focus on how to continue and finish well.

I remember reading a book years ago by Dr. J. Robert Clinton about the Making of a leader. He researched the leaders in the Bible. He identified approximately 1000 leaders mentioned by name. Only about 49 of them had sufficient information about their lives and how they ended. His results were shocking. Only about 30% of them finished well. Others were slowed down, impeded, or disqualified by sinful attitudes and actions in their lives. Issues like the misuse of money, abuse of power, pride, sexual misconduct, family dissension, or complacency either hindered them or caused their removal.

All the scandals of our day and the failures of leaders in the Bible point to something all leaders need, REAL ACCOUNTABILITY! Clinton identified people in those successful leaders' lives who walked alongside them to encourage, support and correct them. Clinton said it well.

"If you are serious about finishing well, you need to find mentors who can hold you accountable in every area of your life and ministry and who will help you avoid the pitfalls that will arise as you move through life. An effective mentor will ensure that you continue to grow and develop."

Scriptures reveal an essential element in God's design for all of us, walking in accountable relationships with others.

- *1 Peter 5:5 Likewise, younger ones, be subject to older ones, and all being subject to one another. Put on humility. For God resists proud ones, but He gives grace to the humble.*
- *Ephesians 5:21 submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of God.*
- *Hebrews 13:17 Yield to those leading you, and be submissive, for they watch for your souls, as those who must give account, that they may do it with joy...*
- *1 Thessalonians 5:12-14 But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, (13) and that you esteem (consider) them very highly in love because of their work.*
- *1 Corinthians 16:15-16 You know the household of Stephanas... (16) that you also be submitted to such people.*

Mentorship, coaching, and even submission can become buzz words that lack real Biblical substance. The substance is that they should bring real influence and accountability, leading to health in leaders and security among the flocks that they serve. I like what one of our Salt & Light African leaders said, expressing God's design for accountability.

“No one can survive all by himself. We need one another. I have to have people in my life which I can trust and others can trust who will help me keep on track with God.”

Walking in genuine, accountable relationships

Walking in genuine relationships with God and others that involves accountability is what the Bible calls “Walking in the light” (1 John 1:5-10). It is one of God's provisions to keep us from “a hardened evil heart of unbelief...through the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:12-13). It includes His provision of healing that is only released as we “Confess your sins to one another and pray for each other so that you may be healed” (James 5:16).

While we confess our sins VERTICALLY to Jesus for forgiveness (1 John 1:8-9), God has designed us to confess HORIZONTALLY to one another for healing/deliverance (James 5:16). One reason for this is that the most deceptive element of the enemy is pride, and a humble confessing to others and their prayers helps remove it.

I appreciate our Salt & Light/C2C families' perspective on leaders and accountability.

- **“Everyone is called to be both making disciples and being disciplined in accountable relationships. This includes church senior leaders, who**

should relate to someone for input, accountability, and care ('every Pastor needs a pastor')."

Four Essential Steps for Living in Accountable Relationships

Make sure they are real: Ensure your personal pastor and those you are accountable to know it. Ambiguity in these matters is the devil's playground. Tell them with complete clarity you want them to pastor you, give input into your life, and hold you accountable.

Make sure they are regular: Have regular communication with those who pastor you and those you are accountable to. In these crucial relationships, you give an account for your struggles and your victories. Make sure you regularly ask them to give you any advice about things you can improve on.

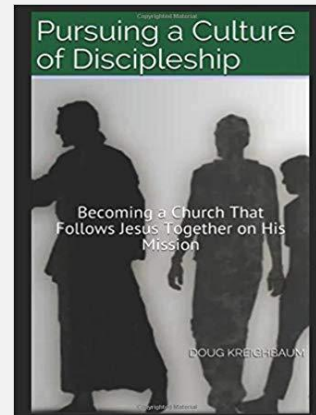
Make sure others know: The people you serve should have a clear knowledge of who pastors you and whom you are accountable to. It is a security point for the flock to know their leaders are accountable to someone they know and respect. This also provides a point of appeal if there are questionable issues that come up.

Make sure they are inclusive, not exclusive: I have seen leaders use the idea of personal pastoring or discipleship as an exclusive relationship ("I am only accountable to my pastor or the one who discipled me"). The Bible clearly says, "Submit to one another in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:21). A good leader is humble enough to receive God's hand of encouragement and correction from all others.

God seems to be cleansing His house of leaders who have been habitually bound and hiding in darkness. Let's make sure we are running to His light and His provision of accountable relationships.

Your Image is what people think you are while integrity is who you really are. Accountability promotes integrity.

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