

H.A.B.I.T.S. – Accountability: Speak Truth in Love, 6/11/17

Recap:

We can't merely think our way into our spiritual life. It requires new spiritual habits.

What is it?

Accountability- The shared responsibility for one another's spiritual health within Christ's household that results in mutual spiritual progress.

Why we need it? The reason we need accountability is because we all tend to drift.

Hebrews 3:12-13 tells us the reality that we all know deep down, that we tend to drift into the subtle deceptiveness of sin and hardened hearts. All we like sheep...

Where do we get it? The rows don't know... need to be intentional about getting into places where this accountability happens. **Membership, Small Groups, ACE, Serving.** But here's the reality you can be in all of these and still not have any accountability in your life. **[Show Shallow Small Group Video]**

What does this look like?

You may say... Ok I'm with you, the Bible says this is how we should live, ideally I understand the concept that we aren't islands unto ourselves and we need people in our lives. But what does this look like in real life? Who should I be holding accountable and who should be holding me accountable? Do you just walk up to people at church and fire questions at them about their personal life? Greeters at the door as people come in, "Welcome! Have you been believing any lies this week?" What would I say? And what if it gets really uncomfortable? What if someone doesn't want to be held accountable? What if it strains relationships?

So the next 30 minutes I want you to think of as an accountability workshop to demystify this a bit.

Who should I be holding accountable and whom should I be held accountable by?

Relationship precedes accountability.

- We don't walk around with our accountability buckets and dump it on everyone around us. This happens in relationships where you are getting to know one another. The Bible talks about what we should be looking for in these kinds of friends.

-We should be seeking out people that we can trust.

Proverbs 18:24

A man of many acquaintances may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

-We should be seeking out people that can challenge us.

Proverbs 27:17 *Iron sharpens iron; so one man sharpens another.*

-We should be seeking out people that share a common goal of godliness.
Proverbs 13:20 *Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.*

What do accountability relationships look like?

This can take on many forms. It may happen in a group like Jesus with his 12 disciples where there was friendship and care for one another's spiritual health. Promise Keepers Mens group that happens on Monday mornings, group of younger guys that meet Friday mornings. Student small group...

But it can also take on a one-on-one or few-on-few intentionality. David and Jonathan that had a covenant relationship together. Paul and Timothy kind of mentoring relationship. My 2 pastors... Maybe you grab breakfast together once a week or once a month. Maybe you go golfing or have a tea at your house...

What do we say? Do you ever find your conversations getting stuck in the world of small talk?

Let me give you some generally good questions that dive below the surface.

1. **What is God teaching you right now?**
2. **What is one specific way I can be praying for you?**
3. **Is there a bad habit/pattern in your life that is stealing your passion for God?**
4. **How can I encourage you?**
5. **What's an area in your life that God wants you to experience freedom?** *Are there fears, worries, sin strongholds, addictions, destructive behaviors, etc. that are shackling you? This question seeks to get at these heart level issues and seek to overcome in Christ.*

As you get to know one another, your strengths, where you are growing, your weaknesses and where you tend to struggle, your blind spots... you can begin to ask each other questions that are more specific to that struggle.

-Someone that struggles with work/life balance. How are you finding rest? How are you intentionally using vacation days?

-Lust- Have you viewed anything that would be compromising?

-Marriage challenges- How have you appreciated or encouraged your spouse this week?

-Spending Habits- Have you been keeping up your budget?

-Anxiety/Control- Have you struggled to trust God this week? How have you remembered the sovereignty of God?

My example of accountability questions.

And what if it gets really uncomfortable? I don't like conflict. What if it strains relationships?

If done well often this can be avoided, but not always. As brothers and sisters in Christ's household sometimes we must be willing to get uncomfortable for the sake of someone else's spiritual health. There are few things sadder and more shameful than the Christian who comes week in and week out to church that people avoid because they are rude or they constantly complain, or completely dominate a conversation or corner you for a half hour about a problem...and yet no one has ever told them that it is a problem. Everyone just hopes someone else will do it. But we can all have blind spots.

The biblical word is admonishment and purpose of admonishment is not shame but spiritual progress.

1 Corinthians 4:14 *I don't write these things to shame you, but to **admonish** you as my beloved children.*

And the Bible commands us to do this to one another and to use the Word of God as the standard by which we admonish others.

Colossians 3:16 *Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and **admonish** one another with all wisdom.*

So we don't try to get people to conform to our standards or personal convictions or judging them because they aren't where we are...but rather we allow the Word to be the standard. And how we do it may be just as important.

What is your motive for admonishing, correcting, questioning someone? Is it to prove you are right? Is it to shame them? Is it manipulative to control them so they do what you want? Or is your motive because you love them and want them to experience the life God wants for them?

Ephesians 4:15 *Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.*

1 Timothy 1:5 *The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*

How do you check your motives?

- Are you angry with this person or resentful toward them? First take that up with the Lord.
- Do you have clarity from God's Word as to why you are admonishing?
- Do you sincerely desire what is good for them?
- Have you taken the log out of your own eye first? Do you need to confess anything?

Example.

We've talked about being willing to speak truth in love to others, are you willing to have others confront you about stuff?

Proverbs 12:1 Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but whoever hates correction is stupid.

Proverbs 15:5 A fool spurns a parent's admonishment but whoever heeds correction shows prudence.

Proverbs 15:32 Those who disregard rebuke despise themselves, but the one who heeds correction gains understanding.

Make a confession? I don't enjoy people correcting me, questioning my motives, calling me out on sin. I don't like it when it's my wife, a friend or someone in the congregation. It's uncomfortable, it can feel embarrassing, I sometimes want to get defensive. But I have found it to be life transforming and powerful in the end.

Proverbs 25:12 *Like a gold ring or an ornament of gold is a wise reprover to a listening ear.*

Proverbs 27:5-6
Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.

Howard Hendricks-

Prior to graduation from Wheaton College, one of my professors called me into his office and confronted me about the use of my speech. Every time I opened my mouth to defend myself he told me to keep it shut until he finished. I stormed out of his office, hotter than a hornet, only to reflect later that he was really right. My conclusion: I finally met the first person in twenty-two years who loved me enough to look me in the eye and challenge me with my greatest problem -- an undisciplined tongue. In fact, in review I believe that flaw could have been fatal to my ministry. This kind but firm man, like a good surgeon, was willing to hurt in order to heal.

Have you invited people into your life to speak truth in love? If you are resisting, ask yourself why.

Jesus has spoken truth in love to us. He tells us the truth about our hearts that we often don't want to hear. He said, you think adultery is just physical? If you lust you have committed adultery in your heart. When the man asks Jesus for justice in splitting an inheritance, Jesus speaks truth- man, your problem is greed. To disciples- you want to be great? You have to become a servant to all. But he loved us enough not to leave us dead and lost in our sin. He said to his disciples, greater love has no one than this, that he would lay his life down for his friends. And that is what he did. Ultimately it is because Jesus spoke truth in love, we can have a relationship with God.