

# Accountability Partners

By Dr. Charles Stanley

Among the Christians you know, do you have even one relationship that involves praying together, transparency, counseling each other, and mutual encouragement? If not, you may be headed toward spiritual stagnation or disaster. Why? Our enemy, the devil, wants to ruin the lives of believers. He attacks when we're vulnerable and then seeks to hold us captive to sin or the guilt that accompanies it.

In contrast, God wants us to have an abundant life here on earth. He also wants us to be ready to stand before Him and give an account of our lives. One of the best ways to stimulate spiritual growth is to have an accountability partner or group. Let's look at what Scripture says about this type of relationship.

## The Power of Confession and Rebuke

Read James 5:16-20.

Why do you think it is healing, in the right setting, to confess our sins to other believers?

Have you ever confessed your sins to another Christian?

If so, how did that affect your relationship with God?

If not, what hinders you from being able to share your faults honestly with others? James writes, "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" (James 5:16).

What example does he give to prove his point (James 5:17-18)?

What is the significance of using this example in the middle of a passage on prayer and healing?

James 5:20 says, "He who turns a sinner from the error of his way . . . will cover a multitude of sins." 1 Peter 4:8 says, "Love covers a multitude of sins."

In what way does a loving accountability relationship "cover" sins (as opposed to covering up sins)?

Think about a few people who have sinned against you recently. How could you cover their sins?

Galatians 6:1-2 tells us how to "turn a sinner from the error of his ways."

How should we approach correcting another believer (Galatians 6:1-2)?

How might a person who offers help to someone else be tempted (Gal. 6:1)?

James wrote, "He who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death" (James 5:20). As believers, we have the promise of heaven. However, our wrongdoing still affects us, bringing death to the abundant life Jesus wants for us (John 10:10).

When you fail to address sins, what are some of the consequences you experience?

If you have ever had someone confront you on an area of sin or a blind spot, how did you handle it?

Proverbs 12:15 says, "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel." When you are criticized unfairly, ask God if any part of it is true. Even if the reproof was

given in the wrong spirit or was not completely accurate, He can use it to make you more fruitful spiritually.

Think back to moments where you felt unfairly criticized in the past. Did you later realize the feedback had a grain of truth?

What did you learn from that experience?

## Choosing an Accountability Partner

Look for these qualities when establishing this type of relationship: Attentiveness. James 1:19 says, "My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."

Do all the traits mentioned in this verse describe you? If not, which could you develop further?

Trustworthiness. Proverbs 20:19 says, "A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much." Someone who is always talking about other people's personal struggles will probably betray you too.

Based on this characteristic, do you think you would make a good accountability partner?  
Who in your life is good at guarding other people's confidences?

Encouragement. Paul wrote, "Encourage one another and build up one another" (1 Thess. 5:11). Even in correction, a loving friend focuses on restoration, not condemnation.

How does Matthew 7:1-2 apply to an accountability relationship?

When you confess your sins to another person, describe how you'd like that individual to respond.

Let the answers above guide you in how to react when others reveal their faults to you.

Common Ground. It's helpful to find a person or a group who can relate to your struggles.

What sort of support do you need right now?

Can you think of someone who might be available to walk with you through the situation?

Once you identify a friend who might make a good accountability partner, start by sharing just a small amount of private information, such as a weakness or sin. If the person responds well, he or she may be a good choice. (Note: Choose an accountability partner who is the same gender as yourself.)

Prayer: Father, please guide me so that I might develop the friendships You have for me. Help me know when to share my struggles and sins, and when to counsel or rebuke someone. Use me to bless others and encourage them to live fully for You. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.