

# Accountability in Small Groups

## Series Overview

What do we mean when we talk about Accountability? How do we even do accountability? What should we be holding each other accountable to? This three-week series is designed to reorient our view of what it means to do accountability in our small groups. The ultimate goal is for small group members to think rightly about God’s desire for us to be in accountability with other followers of Christ. For some, this will mean people opening their hearts to new people despite the fear and struggle it may cause. At other times, this will mean becoming people who offer love, rebuke, and grace as they stand alongside those in their group.

### Why This Series?

- Help each other in the journey of being followers of Christ who live in accountability to others
- Break down walls and clear up misconceptions about accountability
- Discuss what building blocks are required to properly do accountability in small groups
- Discuss and practice the “How to” of accountability in small groups

### Series Breakdown

#### Week 1: What is Accountability and Why Bother?

This study is aimed at answering the questions, “What is accountability?” and “Why should we even bother to do this in a culture that doesn’t value reprimand or difficult feedback?”

#### Week 2: Building Blocks

In this study your group will discuss the building blocks for accountability in small groups. Group members will be introduced to five building blocks that must be present in their group to create an environment where accountability can happen.

#### Week 3: How To

In this study your group will discuss four steps to effective, gospel centered accountability in small groups.

*Each study will include this progress bar to help your group members recall previous discussions as well as see where the discussion is leading over time.*

Study 1	Study 2	Study 3
What is Accountability and Why Bother?	Building Blocks	How To

## Memory Verse

*We would like to challenge your group to memorize the following passage together over the next three weeks. Let your group brainstorm ways to holding each other accountable to memorize the following passage:*

<sup>2</sup>My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, <sup>3</sup>in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

## Colossians 2:2-3 (NIV)

## FYIs

- Handouts are *essential* to this study. Please plan to either gather enough copies for your group from the lobbies at Hope East/West or print them out yourself.
- The goal for each of these studies is to generate about 45 minutes of discussion (excluding Accountability Questions). Some groups may find that they are able to divide an individual study into two nights of discussion—that's okay! Feel free to flex these as needed to suit your unique group dynamic.
- This study comes with a three week “accountability boot camp” for your group to practice during accountability time. Please be sure to leave at least 50 minutes for accountability.

## Accountability in Small Groups

### *Week 1: What Is Accountability and Why Bother?*

Study 1	Study 2	Study 3
What is Accountability and Why Bother?	Building Blocks	How To

#### Learning Objectives

- Walk away with a definition of Biblical accountability.
- Gain a better understanding of the importance of accountability and the purpose of it within a small group.

#### Steps to Prepare (For Leaders)

- Think through your past experiences with accountability and the ways in which you have benefited or seen the fruit from being vulnerable with others.

#### Three Pillars of Small Groups

**Pray for your time together as a group.**

*Leader's Note: Take a moment to cast vision for the three pillars of Small Groups: Community, Bible and Accountability. Share why we believe it's important to incorporate all three pillars into your small group meeting times. Here's a reminder of the three pillars:*

**Community:** *fun, acceptance, being known, sharing the ups and downs of life, support in times of need, and serving together.*

**Bible:** *developing biblical learners and thinkers, growth in understanding of God's Word, and growth in sharing thoughts and questions pertaining to the Word of God.*

**Accountability:** *sharing struggles, battling sin, prayer, follow-up, encouragement, admonishment, and making Jesus the: aim, motivation, answer, & source of their lives.*

**Read Out Loud:** We're going to spend the next three small group study times focusing on Biblical Accountability and the importance it plays in our faith walk. To get us started, we're going to make sure we're all on the same page about what accountability even means.

## What is Biblical Accountability?

? How would you define the word “accountability” or what words come to mind when you hear the word accountability?

*Possible Answers: confessing sin, asking questions, follow up, seeking guidance and wisdom*

Our Definition:

**Biblical Accountability** - The active and consistent practice of gathering for the purpose of applying wisdom, grace, and truth, in accordance with the Scriptures, to our joys, struggles, and life circumstances in the effort to follow Christ together and battle sin in our lives. We do this so that we may more fully pursue Christ with our hearts, minds, actions, and words.

? Do you agree with the definition of Biblical accountability? Is there anything you would add or change?

*Possible Answers: answers may vary*

**Read Out Loud:** Acts 2:42-47 (NIV)

<sup>42</sup> They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. <sup>43</sup> Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. <sup>44</sup> All the believers were together and had everything in common. <sup>45</sup> They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. <sup>46</sup> Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

? In our day and age, it’s sometimes hard to imagine what life was like for believers living during the time of Acts 2. Yet the principles are still applicable. What are some of the principles we can take away from this passage regarding Christian community? How can we apply these principles today into our Small Group? Our local church?

*Possible Answers: generous with their belongings, devoted themselves to teaching and fellowship, ate together, prayed together, worshiped the Lord together. Regarding today: attending Sunday morning worship, invite others over to your home for a meal, be generous with those in need within your small group or local body of Christ.*

## Why Is It Important For Believers To Have Accountability?

**Read Out Loud: James 1:14-15**

<sup>14</sup> But each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. <sup>15</sup> Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”

**Read Out Loud: Jeremiah 17:9**

“<sup>9</sup>The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?”

**Read Out Loud: Luke 11: 24-26**

“<sup>24</sup>When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ <sup>25</sup>When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. <sup>26</sup>Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worst than the first.

? According to these passages, what does sin do to a person?

*Possible Answers: Sin can grow within a person and give birth to death. Sin can deceive a believer’s heart.*

“If you violently war against your flesh, you’ll win ground. It will grow weak, and you’ll grow in grace into the image of Christ. Still the work has to be endless as long as we’re in this world. If you cut the flesh any slack, you’ll watch it regroup and revive. You may even end up worse off than you were before.

- Kris Lundgaard, *Enemy From Within*, P. 40

**Read Out Loud: Hebrews 3:13**

“<sup>13</sup>But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.”

? How does engaging in accountability benefit a Christian?

*Possible Answers: prevent the hardening of a believer’s heart, prevent deceit entering into our heart.*

? Share a time in your life when the Lord has used close relationships and/or accountability to reveal sin’s deceitfulness in your life.

*Possible Answers: answers will vary*

? The world often teaches us that we are to pursue the desires of our heart, yet in the above passages, we are told that our heart and desires can be deceptive. How do you reconcile these two teachings?

*Possible Answers: everything is tainted by sin, which often can include our desires and our heart motivations. God can transform our hearts and empower us to have desires that align with his own.*

## What Does Scripture Have To Say About Accountability?

### Read Out Loud: 1 John 1:8-9

<sup>8</sup> If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup> If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.”

### Read Out Loud: Galatians 6:1-3

<sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup> If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves.”

### Read Out Loud: Hebrews 10:24-25

<sup>24</sup> And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup> not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

### Read Out Loud: Colossians 3:15-17

<sup>15</sup> Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

**?** Each of these passages touch on an important aspect of accountability. Walk through each of these passages and ask, how are these verses describing accountability?

*Possible Answers: confession of sin, restoring a person gently, spurring one another toward love and good deeds, carrying each others burdens, encourage one another, admonish one another.*

**?** In what ways have you experienced these aspects of accountability in your life?

*Possible Answers: answers will vary*

## Why Should We Do Accountability In THIS Small Group?

### Read Out Loud: Romans 12:2-5; 9-10

<sup>2</sup> Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. <sup>3</sup> For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. <sup>4</sup>

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function,<sup>5</sup> so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.<sup>9</sup> Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.<sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.”

### **Read Out Loud: 1 Thessalonians 5:11-18 (NIV)**

<sup>11</sup> Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

<sup>12</sup> Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. <sup>13</sup> Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. <sup>14</sup> And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. <sup>15</sup> Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else. <sup>16</sup> Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray continually, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

**?** In the passages above, what commands are being directed towards the individual? What commands are being given about how to engage with others? How do these commands guide our thinking in regards to accountability?

*Possible Answers: do not conform, be transformed, view yourself with sober judgement, hate what is evil, cling to good, rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks always. Be devoted to one another in love, honor others above yourself, live in peace with one another etc. If we are to be transformed, being part of a community that displays honor and devotion will enable us to confess and encourage one another.*

**?** What makes it hard for Christians to follow through and practice these commands?

*Possible Answers: Other people’s opinions, culture, fear, shame, past experiences.*

### **For Discussion and Accountability**

**?** From what we’ve talked through tonight, what do you believe our small group does well with accountability? What is one way you’d like to see our group grow in accountability?

**?** As a large group, we talked about the purpose of confession, restoration, encouragement, carrying one another’s burdens and being called to live in peace with one another. As you think through those actions, which one is hard or unnatural for you to do? How could you apply one of those to your relationships this week?

### **Memory Verse**

<sup>2</sup> My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ,<sup>3</sup> in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. **Colossians 2:2-3 (NIV)**

## Accountability in Small Groups

### *Week 2: Building Blocks*

Study 1	Study 2	Study 3
What is Accountability and Why Bother?	Building Blocks	How To

#### Learning Objective

- Think through and implement the building blocks required for effective and gospel centered accountability in your small group.

#### Steps to Prepare (For Leaders)

- Take time to read through the study and assess how your group is doing with each of these building blocks.
- This study is long and may take you more than one week to get through. That's okay! Take your time and allow your group to explore these questions.

#### Get Started

- **Pray for your time together as a group.**
- **If you haven't done so recently, take some time to go over Hope's Two Rules of Confidentiality, which are included in this study.**





## 2 Rules of Confidentiality

Hope Community Church places a high emphasis on Gospel in Community. Small groups are an integral part of making Gospel in community happen for hundreds of people at Hope. In order for people to find true gospel community, they must first feel comfortable and safe in the company of those around them. Comfort and safety can only be achieved in groups that teach and follow guidelines for confidentiality. It would be incredibly difficult for someone to share their heart and struggles with people they thought might share those thoughts and struggles with people outside of the group.

In order to create an environment for healthy confidentiality, we ask small group members to agree to the following two rules of confidentiality.

### Hope's Two Rules of Confidentiality

1. **Copyright:** Much like musicians own the music they make, or authors own the words that they write, people own what they say. We are not (legally) supposed to copy music or books and hand them over to other people. The same is true of the words we speak. Words spoken in small group settings are meant for ONLY small group settings. Before small group members share anything said at small group, they should ask permission of the 'author' of the words.

For example, if Kate shares a story in small group and Matt thinks sharing Kate's story with a friend would be a great encouragement to both Kate and his friend, Matt must first ask Kate for permission to share her story with his friend. After he receives permission from Kate, he is free to share that story (and only that story) with the friend he asked Kate about. This is not a license (unless Kate has given him an open license to share) to share with anyone he chooses.

2. **Implying Secrets:** Implying someone has a secret is just as wrong (and potentially more damaging) than actually sharing a secret. Small group members are not allowed to imply that other small group members have secrets or struggles to others outside the group (or outside the group of people told within the small group).

For example, If Jeff shares a struggle during men's prayer time, it would be inappropriate for Tim to go home to his roommates and say, "Hey guys, you should really pray for Jeff. He is having a pretty big struggle." Even if the motive is to simply pray for Jeff, this is still a breach of confidentiality. If Tim would like to pray for Jeff he can simply pray on his own or with other men in his small group.

### **Confidentiality FAQ's**

#### **Q: What can I share with my spouse if we are in the same small group?**

A: Spouses are free to share and discuss any information that was made public in open sharing and discussion times. Things shared in prayer times where husbands and wives are separated (gender specific accountability times) is NOT to be shared with spouses (unless permission is granted with the copyright rule).

#### **Q: Can I share things people tell me outside of small group?**

A: Being in a small group does not give you license to share other people's information with your small group. If someone shares a story with you in confidence (whether that person is a part of your group or not), you are not permitted to share this information with the entire group.

#### **Q: What if someone shares something with me that is too much for me to bear alone?**

A: At the time someone shares this type of story with you, it is important to ask the following question by saying, "Thank you for trusting me with your story. It sounds like this is a heavy burden for you. I think it would be really helpful if we involved \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank with a name or title) in this discussion. I think that person would be best able to help you and I walk through this. Would you mind if I talked to \_\_\_\_\_ about your situation?" Most often, people say yes to this. If people respond by saying no, it is important to ask why they are concerned. You may need to validate their feelings and remind them that the person you are discussing is a trustworthy and confidential source as well who has greater resources.

Of course, if you believe the person sharing their story with you is dangerous to you, themselves, or others it is VERY IMPORTANT that you tell someone immediately.

## The Building Blocks of Accountability

**Read Out Loud:** There are (at least) five building blocks to creating healthy accountability in your small group. During this study we will take time to walk through each of these five building blocks.

### 1. TRUST

#### **Read Out Loud: Psalm 33: 16-22**

<sup>16</sup> No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength. <sup>17</sup> A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot save. <sup>18</sup> But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, <sup>19</sup> to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine. <sup>20</sup> We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. <sup>21</sup> In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. <sup>22</sup> May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you.

#### **Read Out Loud: Romans 8:31-34**

<sup>31</sup> What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

#### **Read Out Loud: James 5:12**

<sup>12</sup> Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple “Yes” or “No.” Otherwise you will be condemned.



We see in the passages above that God does what he says he will do and he always has our ultimate best interests at heart. How do those truths about God impact our relationship with Him?  
*Possible Answers: Relationships are stronger when you know you can trust the other person, God simply states he is for us, he gave his son for us all, Christ is interceding for us, we can do likewise.*

*Leader's Note: Draw this chart on a whiteboard or large piece of paper. Have someone in your group fill out this chart as you answer the questions below.*

Attributes of Trusted People/Groups	Attributes of Untrusted People/Groups

? Who have you most trusted in your life? What about that person or group makes you trust them so much?

*Possible Answers: Parents, mentor, teacher, coach. They listened well and they took time to be with me. They were there for me during tough times.*

? Who have you least trusted in your life? What about that person or group makes you distrust them?

*Possible Answers: My boss who always seemed to be just looking out for her own interests. My coworkers who gossip all the time. A former friend who suddenly turned their back on me.*

? Can I trust the people in this group with my whole heart? Will I trust the people in this group with my whole heart?

*Possible Answers: Answers will vary.*

**Read Out Loud:** Take a minute to jot down answers for the questions below. These answers will be discussed during accountability time.

*Leader's Note: Make sure EVERYONE in your group writes something down. This is important. We want people to dig deep.*

For self reflection and later discussion:

? Am I living and speaking in such a way that shows I am a trustworthy person?

? Am I allowing myself to open up my heart and life to others and trust them?

Optional Transition: *The second building block is grace. Let's look at a couple passages that speak to the concept of grace.*

## 2. GRACE

**Read Out Loud:** Ephesians 2:1-10

<sup>1</sup>As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup> All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. <sup>4</sup> But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup> And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— <sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

**Read Out Loud: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NIV)**

<sup>16</sup>Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. <sup>18</sup> So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

? What stands out to you in these passages about grace?

*Possible Answers: answers will vary.*

? How does an attitude of grace foster accountability in small groups?

*Possible Answers: People are willing to share when they know others will listen and follow up with grace. I will probably treat others more graciously during accountability time if it's been extended to me.*

? Do I believe the gospel applies to me and that I am truly forgiven for and washed clean of my sin? Why is it so difficult at times to believe these truths?

*Possible Answers: The lies seem louder than the truths in my life. My past sins still cloud my view of myself. I don't see daily evidence of these truths in my life. It's too hard to battle the lies daily.*

? How can I extend God’s grace to others in my small group in the midst of their sin? How do I do this when other’s sin directly impacts me?

*Possible Answers: Consistently praying for my small group members. Being quick to listen, slow to speak. Asking questions to better understand the heart. Honestly extending forgiveness.*

**Read Out Loud:** Take a minute to jot down answers for the questions below. These answers will be discussed during accountability time.

For self reflection and later discussion:

- ? Am I extending myself grace in the midst of my own sin?
- ? Am I extending grace to others when I see sin in their life?

### 3. HUMILITY

- ? What are your typical internal and external reactions to others when they point out your sin or areas of weakness?

*Possible Answers: Denial, shutting down, harmful actions or words in defense, sadness, guilt.*

- ? When challenged or threatened, instinctively most people digress to one of three things: Blame, Deny, Defend. Which of these three are you most tempted to default to? Why?

*Possible Answers: Answers will vary.*

#### **Read Out Loud: Titus 3:3-7 (NIV)**

<sup>3</sup>At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. <sup>4</sup>But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup>he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup>whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup>so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

#### **Read Out Loud: Philippians 2:3-8 (NIV)**

<sup>3</sup>Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup>not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. <sup>5</sup>In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup>Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; <sup>7</sup>rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup>And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!

- ? According to these verses, where does our value come from? Once we have a greater understanding of our own value in God's sight, how then should we view others and their value?

*Possible Answers: As we allow our value to come from Christ, we should be reminded that the value of ALL people comes from God. We are no better or worse than any other human being.*

- ? How can having a proper understanding of the equal value of all people help us to receive and give correction in a gospel-centered way?

*Possible Answers: We will view others as God does: justified, heirs, dearly loved. So our actions should be a reflection of his humble actions, not our own prideful actions.*

? What's the humble, Christ-centered response to someone pointing out sin or weakness in our lives?

Why does this become more difficult when we know the sins of those offering correction?

*Possible Answers: Accepting their correction with thanks and gratitude. Taking the opportunity to learn and grow - to become more Christ-like.*

**Read Out Loud:** Take a minute to jot down answers for the questions below. These answers will be discussed during accountability time.

For self reflection and later discussion:

? Am I responding with humility when other sinners point out my sin or weakness?

? Am I offering correction to others in a way that is rooted in humility?

#### 4. MUTUAL SUBMISSION

? When you hear the word "submission" what words or images come to mind?

*Possible Answers: UFC/wrestling, giving in, submission to authority*

Submission: The action or fact of accepting or yielding to a superior force or to the will or authority of another person. Accepting authority. Being brought under the control of someone else.

**Read Out Loud:**

"Submission is a love word before it is an authority word. You submit to others because you desire to enter into a relationship that benefits you and those around you."

Without submission three negative things happen:

- Your needs won't be met
- You can't practice humility, the character trait that allows you to submit
- You shut out others from loving you

When you do submit to others and invite them to join you on the journey, your needs will be met, you will practice humility, and others will be able to love you."<sup>1</sup>

? What are your thoughts about this definition and quote?

*Possible Answers: I don't like being under someone else's authority. It seems unfair. I like the idea of not having to be in control. When the heart behind it is love, it changes the feel of the word. I've never thought of it as an invitation to join you on the journey before.*

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<sup>1</sup> Hull, Bill. *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ*. NavPress, 2006. P 159

? Looking back at Philippians 2, how did Christ set the example of humble, loving submission? How can this motivate us to submit to others?

*Possible Answers: He valued others above himself, he took the nature of a servant, was obedient. We're no better than him, so we can absolutely follow his lead.*

**Read Out Loud: Ephesians 5:8-21 (NIV)**

<sup>8</sup>For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light <sup>9</sup>(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)<sup>10</sup> and find out what pleases the Lord. <sup>11</sup>Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. <sup>12</sup>It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. <sup>13</sup>But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. <sup>14</sup>This is why it is said:

“Wake up, sleeper,  
rise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you.”

<sup>15</sup>Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup>making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup>Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. <sup>18</sup>Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup>speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, <sup>20</sup>always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>21</sup>Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

? How does verse 21 fit with the preceding verses in this chapter of Ephesians?

*Possible Answers: We are given a whole list of wise ways to live in the verses preceding 21. Our own actions will inevitably affect others we're doing life alongside, so we will need to set aside preferences and live graciously within these guidelines to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

? Why is it important for believers to practice submission within relationships?

*Possible Answers: We want to be a reflection of Christ. He lived graciously and considered others above himself. It would be a terrible witness to non-believers if we constantly bulldozed, controlled, manipulated our relationships.*

? What can make it hard for us to submit to one another?

*Possible Answers: Answers will vary.*

? What does healthy, Christ-centered submission look like in a small group?

*Possible Answers: A group that wants to see everyone grow closer to Christ. A group that functions with people listening, voices being heard, intentional leading, mutual desire to reflect Christ's character.*

**Read out loud:** Take a minute to jot down answers for the questions below. These answers will be discussed during accountability time.



For self reflection and later discussion:

? Am I willing to submit to those around me out of obedience to Christ?

? Am I playing my part in creating an environment where mutual submission is rooted in deep love for Christ and others?

## 5. Encouragement

### 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15 (NIV)

<sup>14</sup>And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. <sup>15</sup>Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.

### Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV)

<sup>24</sup>And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup>not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

### Colossians 3:15-17 (NIV)

<sup>15</sup>Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup>Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. <sup>17</sup>And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

? Looking back at the verses you just read, what stands out to you?

*Possible Answers: Answers will vary.*

? What are tangible, active ways we can encourage each other in our small group?

*Possible Answers: Answers will vary.*

**Read out loud:** Take a minute to jot down answers for the questions below. These answers will be discussed during accountability time.

For self reflection and later discussion:

? Am I following up with others and celebrating all God is doing in their lives?

? Am I opening myself up for follow-up questions and sharing all God is doing in my life?

### For Discussion and Accountability

Look back through the self-reflection questions from each of the five sections and discuss your answers.

#### 1. Trust

? Am I living and speaking in such a way that shows I am a trustworthy person?

? Am I allowing myself to open up my heart and life to others and trust them?

#### 2. Grace

? Am I extending myself grace in the midst of my own sin?

? Am I someone who extends grace to others when I see sin in their life?

#### 3. Humility

? Am I responding with humility when other sinners point out my sin or weakness?

? Am I offering correction to others in a way that is rooted in humility?

#### 4. Submission

? Am I willing to submit to those around me out of obedience to Christ?

? Am I being a part of creating an environment where mutual submission is rooted in deep love for Christ and others?

#### 5. Encouragement

? Am I following up with others and celebrating all God is doing in their lives?

? Am I opening myself up for follow-up questions and sharing all God is doing in my life?

### Memory Verse

<sup>2</sup> My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, <sup>3</sup> in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

**Colossians 2:2-3 (NIV)**

## Accountability in Small Group

### Week 3: How To

Study 1	Study 2	Study 3
What is Accountability and Why Bother?	Building Blocks	How To

#### Learning Objective

- Learn some of the basic but crucial aspects of putting accountability into practice.

#### Steps to Prepare (For Leaders)

- Think through your past experiences with accountability and how those might influence the following discussion on “how” accountability is done: good, bad, or otherwise.
- Be prepared to change the way you’ve done accountability in the past, especially if it doesn’t line up with what the study reveals.

#### A Quick Recap...

Pray for your time together as a group.

? Can anyone summarize the last two weeks and what we’ve talked about so far in regards to accountability?

#### Our Assertion:

God has not only saved us individually, but has saved us *into* a community of fellow believers. One of the best tools we have for pursuing accountability is each other. Throughout scripture, the aspect of “one anothering” is strong, and accountability depends on being in relationship to one another.

#### 1. Confess & Admonish

? When you hear the word “confession,” what comes to mind?

*Possible Answers: Catholic confession booth, admitting to something done wrong, generally an unpleasant experience, criminal confession.*

#### Read Out Loud: 1 John 1:8-10 (NIV)

<sup>8</sup> If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup> If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.”

? According to this passage, why should we confess our sins?

*Possible Answers: Because we all sin. Claiming to be without sin is deceitful and makes God out to be a liar. But if we confess, we will receive forgiveness.*

? In general, are you good at confessing your sins? Why or why not? What does confessing actually look like? What's the value of confessing our sins out loud?

*Possible Answers: Some are more prone to sharing everything, others are very private, shy, or simply uncomfortable sharing sin or struggles they have due to past experiences, shame, ignorance, pride, etc...*

? When someone decides to confess a sin to you, how do you receive it well? What are some things you don't want to do if you're on the receiving end of a confession?

*Possible Answers: Don't react! Be tactful. Offer gospel-centered truth, guidance, and assurance.*

? How has God been faithful to you when you've confessed your sins in the past?

*Possible Answers: God has provided a sense of peace and rest; a reassurance that living in sin is not my true identity anymore. Sin is not my master anymore.*

#### **Read Out Loud: Galatians 6:1-6 (NIV)**

<sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup>If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. <sup>4</sup>Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, <sup>5</sup>for each one should carry their own load. <sup>6</sup>Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor.

*Leader's Note: "Admonish" is not a word we use a lot in our vocabulary. A simple definition would be to caution, advise, or counsel against something, usually in a good-willed manner, or to remind someone of their duty towards something. That said, one of the greatest commandments is to love one another, and admonishing can and should take place only in the context of love, not out of bitterness, hatred, pride, jealousy, or malcontent.*

? What do you think of when you hear the word admonish? How does our culture influence the way we think or feel about admonishing or being admonished?

*Possible Answers: It's not a word that is used often, but can have negative connotations. No one likes to be told they did something wrong, hurtful, or was weak.*

? How does this passage describe interactions between people? Does that match with our culture's definition of admonishment and "calling out?"

*Possible Answers: This passage describes carrying each other's burdens, but also doing your part and not being lazy. Restoring gently when appropriate, and not comparing yourself to others.*

## 2. Repent

? What does repentance mean? Why is repentance an important aspect to the Christian faith?

*Possible Answers: Turning from something and then towards something else. We are called to turn from our life of sin to a life of freedom in Christ.*

**Word Study: The Greek Word for "Repent" is *metanoia* - to have a fundamental change in thinking that leads to a fundamental change in behavior.**

### Read Out Loud: Romans 6:11-14 (NIV)

<sup>11</sup> In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.<sup>12</sup> Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. <sup>13</sup> Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.<sup>14</sup> For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

? How does this passage describe someone who has been unified with Jesus? What are the truths from this passage that can be used in our fight against sin?

*Possible Answers: Consider yourself no longer dead but alive! And because of that, we don't have to allow sin to reign (have authority) in our lives any longer. It no longer defines you - our identity is now in Christ.*

? Why do you think these truths are an important aspect to accountability? What does living out repentance look like in the context of a small group?

*Possible Answers: These are the kinds of truth that can/should be spoken in the context of community, not just answers about behavior modification (change this, do that differently, etc...)*

## 3. Apply The Gospel, Not Religion

### Read Out Loud: Galatians 2:20-21 (NIV)

<sup>20</sup> I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. <sup>21</sup> I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!

? What does “if righteousness could be gained through the Law, Christ died for nothing” mean?

*Possible Answers: If we could have attained being right with God by what we do/think/say, then Christ’s sacrifice was for nothing. Specifically the Old Testament Law was never meant to be used to fully achieve perfect righteousness, but rather highlight the need for Christ’s better and greater sacrifice.*

? Given the passage above, how would you encourage someone who is trying to combat their sin with the law or works-based-righteousness?

*Possible Answers: Works-based-righteousness will only lead to a legalistic view and understanding of Christian life. It is only through trusting in Christ’s atoning sacrifice can we then start to live a life of freedom.*

? What promises of God are important to highlight when discussing our battle with sin?

*Possible answers: He will never leave us nor forsake us. He will fight for us. He has given us the spirit to help us. God’s power is made perfect **in** our weakness. The ultimate battle has already been won and we **get** to live out our faith instead of a felt obligation towards God.*

#### 4. Next Steps - Let’s Practice!

**Read Out Loud:** Thus far, we’ve talked about the importance of confession, repentance, and how applying the Gospel is the only true way to fight sin. We’re now going to move into a time of discussing practical ways to follow-up with one another - a crucial step to accountability.

? What does it actually look like to “keep someone accountable” to something? What tools do you have at your disposal that would make your time together more fruitful?

*Possible Answers: Ask them, “what do you want me to ask you about next time we meet?” “What do you want to be held accountable to?” You can then set reminders on your phone, use texts, emails, phone calls, a prayer journal, etc...*

? What does follow-up look like for your small group? How much importance are we putting on actually following up with people when they share struggles, prayer requests, etc...?

*Possible Answers: Some groups may not follow-up at all and need to practice*

? Are we being consistent, not only in our general attendance, but also with how much time we spend in accountability with one another?

*Possible Answers: Answers will vary.*

## For Discussion and Accountability

*Leader's Note: We're asking you to practice a much more regimented version of accountability tonight - implementing confession, repentance, applying gospel truths, and then asking how to intentionally follow up with group members. This will probably take more time than you're used to. It may also be helpful for members to split into smaller groups in case people aren't comfortable confessing to the whole group. We advise the groups be no smaller than 3, though. In any case, you know your members the best and we trust you!*

Step 1: Confess your sin.

**Read out Loud:** Confession can be hard. Sometimes, mercifully God doesn't make all of our sin known to us. It's ok if nothing immediately comes to mind. Perhaps think through a general area of sin (pride, laziness, pursuing the idol of comfort, hanger, something I should be doing but I'm not, etc..).

Step 2: Repentance.

**Read out Loud:** Ask yourself, "Am I viewing this sin the way God sees it? Does it break my heart the way it breaks God's heart? Am I willing to turn away from it?"

Step 3: Apply the Gospel

**Read out Loud:** Remember Christ's death on the cross has covered this sin. Can you look at this area of sin knowing that Christ's sacrifice has been sufficient payment and that you don't need to earn God's forgiveness? How do you remember that you've been made alive in Christ, and that sin no longer has mastery over you because of Christ's life, death, and resurrection?

Step 4: Follow-up

**Read out Loud:** Knowing I'm forgiven, and that I can't earn God's favor, what steps do I need to take to live a life that more fully honors God? A few examples could be: reaching out to my neighbor to whom God has been calling me to show kindness; guarding my mouth when I'm tempted to participate in gossip with my co-workers; getting off the computer/phone when I'm alone and I'm tempted to look at pornography; carving out time in my day to read and meditate on God's word; spending more time in prayer for my family, roommates, coworkers, neighbors.

How can the group come alongside me in my battle against these sins? What can the group ask me about next week? Do I need a mid-week text or email? How can the group celebrate together as God empowers us to kill sin in our lives?

**?** What is your personal approach towards sin? Do you hide it? Do you ignore it? Do you share it?

How might the promises of freedom held within the gospel message encourage you to be bold in fighting your sin, and how can your small group help you in those battles?

? How can our small group actively apply the whole of this study as we move to grow in our accountability with one another?

### **Memory Verse**

<sup>2</sup> My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, <sup>3</sup> in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

**Colossians 2:2-3 (NIV)**