

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.

Memory Verse

² 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, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Colossians 2:2-3 (NIV)

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.

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?

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?

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

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ 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, ⁴⁷ 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?

Why Is It Important For Believers To Have Accountability?

Read Out Loud: James 1:14-15

¹⁴But each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. ¹⁵Then, 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

⁹The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"

Read Out Loud: Luke 11: 24-26

²⁴When 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.' ²⁵When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. ²⁶Then 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?

"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

¹³But 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?

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

? 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?

What Does Scripture Have To Say About Accountability?

Read Out Loud: 1 John 1:8-9

⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ 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

¹ 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. ² Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. ³ If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves."

Read Out Loud: Hebrews 10:24-25

²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ 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

¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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?

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

Why Should We Do Accountability In THIS Small Group?

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

²Do 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. ³ 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. ⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves."

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

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

¹² 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. ¹³ Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. ¹⁴ And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. ¹⁵ Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else. ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ 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?

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

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

² 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, ³ 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.



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

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

Read Out Loud: Romans 8:31-34

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² 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? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ 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

¹² 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?

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?

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

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

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 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

Read Out Loud: Ephesians 2:1-10

¹As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² 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. ³ 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. ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ 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. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ 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)

¹⁶Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ 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?

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

? 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?

? 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?

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?

? 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?

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

³At 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. ⁴But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he 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, ⁶whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so 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)

³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. ⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ 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?

? 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?

? 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?

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?

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.

“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.”¹

? What are your thoughts about this definition and quote?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Read Out Loud: 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15 (NIV)

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

Read Out Loud: Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV)

²⁴And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵not 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 (NIV)

¹⁵Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let 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. ¹⁷And 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?

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

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

²My 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, ³ 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.

A Quick Recap...

? 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?

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

⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ 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?

? 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?

? 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?

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

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

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

? 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?

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

2. Repent

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

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)

¹¹In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹²Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³Do 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. ¹⁴For 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?

? 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?

3. Apply The Gospel, Not Religion

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

²⁰ 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. ²¹ 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?

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

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

4. Next Steps - Let's Practice!

? 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?

? 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...?

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

For Discussion and Accountability

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

² 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, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. **Colossians 2:2-3 (NIV)**