

Accountability

God's intention was that we not be alone. (Genesis 2) We were made for relationships. As we seek to walk out our convictions, we soon discover that we need others to walk beside us. Living a healthy life and walking with Christ is not something we are free to do alone as we may have chosen to do in the past. Once we realize this fact, the challenge then becomes letting others in on the secret parts of our lives that bring shame. Letting people see the rotten parts for what they are, is no simple task. We may find many reasons to withhold, but we must press ahead and learn to let ourselves be vulnerable. Just as confession was intended to bring about freedom from a guilty conscience, so accountability is the submitting of our lives to others to preserve the work Christ has done in our hearts. If we keep that work to ourselves, it cannot take root as deeply as needed.

Only when we share with others and make God's goodness to us known, can life have its fullest meaning. We need to know that others know us. When we realize that we are not the only ones following our story, we will be persuaded to work even harder to bring about good results. In this lesson we will look at our need for honesty – the ability to be real with others and receive the same in return – and how we all need people to walk alongside us. We will contemplate what we need to get started on the path of accountability and discover how it all works once we commit ourselves to it. God never intended for us to go at this alone.

Our Need for Honesty

Author Barbara Johnson writes, "Openness is to wholeness as secrets are to sickness."

King David expresses that same thought:

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.
Psalm 32:3-4

Our bodies react negatively to internal struggles. The stress created through internalizing sin leads to depression, ulcers and other physical illnesses. To overcome the conflict, many seek a "drug of choice" to anesthetize that pain.

... Psychologists at Santa Clara University (CA) found that "keeping distressing experiences or troubling information to yourself can be hazardous to your health." That is, people in their study "who tended to keep secrets ... about painful or shameful life events ... were more likely to experience feelings of anxiety and depression as well as a host of physical symptoms, such as headaches, indigestion and fatigue."

In yet another study, researchers at Southern Methodist University, Texas, concluded that "not discussing or confiding (a traumatic) event with another may be more damaging than having experienced the event per se."
Gordon Dalbey, *The Wolf Loves the Lone Sheep*

God desires truth in our inward parts (See Psalm 51: 6). And the truth is that we can't carry our burdens alone. Integrity leads to peace – when what we think lines up with what we do. Often inside, we realize we can't go it alone, but we are deathly afraid to let anyone know what is really going on inside of us. We are afraid to ask for help, afraid to acknowledge to others that our problems are bigger than we can handle. As we allow our thoughts and actions to meet and agree, that we find freedom.

We were made for relationship.
God intends that we
learn and grow in the context of
relationships with one another.

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD" – and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Psalm 32:5

Walking Alongside

We were not meant to grow in isolation. The New Testament reveals a life of mutual care and submission towards one another.

Solomon put it this way in the book of Ecclesiastes:

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work. If one falls down his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

God's intention for the body of Christ is that we learn and grow together. We need each other. Like the different parts of the human body need each function the other parts supply, we as members of Christ's body need each other working together, side by side, in our journey toward wholeness. Though it may seem contrary, the truth is that no one is in less need of help than anyone else. Every human being needs others in their life, in order to encourage, strengthen, and comfort them (I Corinthians 14:3). It is not just the homosexually broken who are in need of assistance. The Bible tells us this need is a human condition.

Getting Started

Involvement in an accountability group, for many, is a bold step. Because the nature of our struggle with same-sex attraction is relational, God chooses to do much of the healing work in the context of relationships. The hard part is allowing others to know the mistakes and faults we have. In our minds, we view our shortcomings as worse than what other people struggle with. This is not the case. Finding the right group will be important for ensuring the support and love you will need to grow. But they may not be the group of people whom you naturally gravitate towards. It is normal to feel uncomfortable as you enter into this kind of relationship. What is most important is that the individuals you become involved with display a desire for maturity that will help you to grow. (This most often means you will not be surrounded by fellow strugglers.)

What does an accountability group look like?

- It is persons of the same sex, maybe two or three, who commit to meeting on a regular basis for mutual support, encouragement and prayer.

Who should be in this group?

- First and foremost, it should consist of people you can trust. In order to bring up the difficult issues we all encounter, it has to be a place where you feel the freedom to speak honestly and openly.
- Next, all members involved need to share a common commitment to grow in Christ. Proverbs 27:17 states, “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” Those we surround ourselves with affect us. Good relationships, in a committed format, can produce wonderful outcomes.
- The group should consist of different ages and spiritual levels. If it only contained persons like yourself, you would miss out on the insight and perspective of different viewpoints.

How Does It Work?

The best place to look for an accountability group would be within your church. Many churches offer groups for sexual and relational struggles. But if there are no pre-existing groups you could join, you may want to ask your church leadership to assist you in forming an accountability group. Here are some simple rules to follow when starting an accountability group that can help ensure your success together.

- **Agree upon a format:** A good group needs some level of definition. Agreeing on common goals before you get started can help to provide a safe place to begin to grow. With a stated beginning and ending time, a defined purpose, and a simple format, a support/accountability group can be a wonderful catalyst for growth. Since this is a group, working out the details as a group is part of the process. It also insures a deeper level of commitment. The more one invests, the more committed they will be.
- **Commitment:** A good group requires that each member make a commitment to regularly participate. This goes for those times when it gets rough. It is in those times that we need to be committed the most, and if we have already laid those foundations, we will find the support we need when our world feels like it's falling apart.
- **Making the most of group time:** You will get out of a group what you put into it. You cannot expect to find the support you need, unless

Our sexual struggles are partly the result of unmet genuine emotional needs. Our attempts to meet these needs apart from God have only led to a life of frustration and futility.

you are willing to be honest. You must share those things that you struggle with, but also learn the lesson of supporting someone else when they experience hard times.

We learn and grow as we submit to one another and those in authority over us. It is for our safety that God uses leaders to guide us. (Ephesians 5:21)

If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin. I John 1:7

If you are faithful to walk forth in the truth you have received, you will find freedom in your struggle with homosexuality and other issues in your life that you have been unable to manage. God will meet you there, and you will not walk this road alone.

Reflection & Journaling

Day 1 – Our Need for Honesty

One of the marks of maturity in a believer’s life is when he or she values and invites accountability. Being in relationship with others whom we trust allows us to be transparent about our struggles and it opens the door to the grace and truth that we need in order to mature into Christ-likeness. It is one of the ways we can safeguard our soul from the enemy, who delights in devouring the lamb who is alone and isolated.

This lesson stated that “accountability is the submitting of our lives to others in order to preserve the work that Christ has done in our hearts.” Do you believe that statement?

How is being transparent a way to preserve the repentance and healing that has taken place in your life?

Hebrews 10:23-25 details some of the benefits of being in relationship with other believers. List those benefits below.

Day 4 – How Does It Work?

This lesson gives you some guidelines about how to start and govern an accountability group. Because of the nature of your struggle, it will be important to come under the authority and covering of someone, such as a pastor or a board, who will hold your group accountable and provide the safety of their covering and discipline.

Today we will also look at accountability apart from a group setting. As you grow in healing and maturity, you may eventually find that you no longer need to be part of a group that focuses on the homosexual struggle. And yet, as we have already discussed in this lesson, all of us need ongoing relationships of accountability. You will need to seek someone out whom you can meet with on a regular basis for prayer and encouragement. Ideally, this would be someone from your church. Perhaps your church has a mentorship program, or has small cell groups that meet for Bible study. Purpose to connect with a group of people who are committed to growing in grace and truth. As you get connected, ask the Lord to direct you concerning what He knows is needful as you continue in your journey and to a person whom you can meet with one on one.

Where are you today on your healing path? Are you in need of an accountability group that focuses specifically on the homosexual struggle? Or, are you involved in a small group at your church? Do you have a specific person you regularly meet with for accountability and encouragement?
