

SIMPLE SYSTEM FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability is an important part of a transformative culture. To maintain the integrity of the culture, each believer in every generation must have a healthy accountability system. I call this system an accountability wheel. Just like the pressure in a tire must be maintained for it to roll properly, every individual must have all the components in the accountability wheel to maintain healthy spiritual development that makes up a healthy transformative environment.

DAVID AND NATHAN

2 Samuel 12:1-15 (NIV) David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity."

Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more.'"

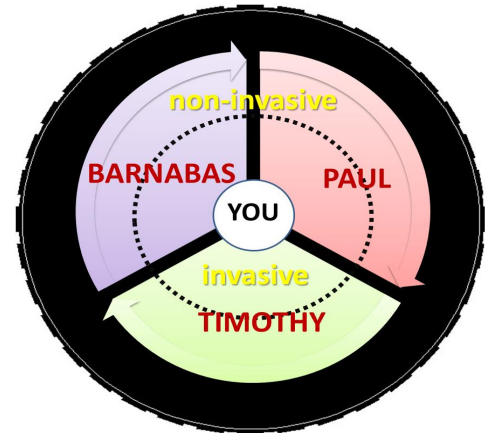
It begins with you. No! It begins with a spiritually healthy you! One thing you must have to be a spiritually healthy Christian is accountability. You must surround yourself with people who love you enough to speak the truth, people who love and encourage you, and people in whose lives you are actively encouraging and speaking the truth.

David, the man after God's heart, forgot his need for accountability at the pinnacle of his success. With no one empowered to ask him the hard questions, he becomes arrogant, commits adultery and murder, and initiates a cover-up. In the passage above, we see David having successfully hidden his sin from the world. Not only has he hidden it, but he has also used it to his political advantage. He is now seen as the king who has taken the widow of one of his fallen soldiers into his home to care for her. "Oh, how King David loves and cares for his men" is the talk of the town. All is well or well-hidden until God sends Nathan to expose David's treachery. Nathan tells David a story that would appeal to the little shepherd boy within him. David probably remembered having lambs in his flock that were more pets than livestock. As David hears about the story of a man who feeds his guest the pet lamb stolen from his neighbor's fold, he becomes furious. Nathan the wise prophet, at the climax of David's rage, points his bony finger at David's face and says, "You are the man!" He then supports his case for David being the cruel neighbor in the story in spite of all the blessings God had bestowed upon David. *Anointed King, delivered from the hand of Saul, given the house and kingdom of Saul* are part of the list proving David's sin against grace. The final nail in Nathan's argument of accusation, and this must have been the proverbial straw, had to be: *if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more.*

What went wrong? Where did he make the wrong turn to head down such a perverted road? The answer is that David failed to allow others to speak into his life. What if in the beginning of his lustful fancies, David had empowered Nathan, who could have asked him, "Why do you go to the roof at night? What are you looking at?" He may even have confronted him with, "Stop! Think about what you are doing!" Wouldn't it have been better if David had had someone who could have said, "David don't be that man" instead of "David, you are the man!" Every preacher or leader who has fallen into sin and public disgrace has followed this same pattern. They have removed or lost all the friends who could critique their decision making.

The question is: whom have you empowered to ask you the hard questions about your time, talents, and resources? Who asks you about your unaccounted for money and time? To whom have you given the right to do what Nathan did to David? Who has the right regarding your sin to say, "You are the man. You are responsible"? Who can ask you the hard questions such as, "What are you doing with your time? What are you doing with your money? What are you doing with your talents? What are you doing with your soul or life?"

If you never hold yourself accountable, sooner or later God will. Consider the following.



Romans 3:19 (NIV) Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

Romans 14:9-12 (NIV) For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: " 'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.' " So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

2 Corinthians 5:10 (NIV) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

ACCOUNTABILITY IS ABOUT AUTHORITY

Authority is the issue. If you say God is sovereign, the ruler of all things and the ruler of your life, you must surrender to His authority and the spiritual authority HE has placed in your life. You cannot be surrendered to God without being surrendered to the people God has placed in your life.

In addition, this authority is an issue of honor, not just obedience. While obedience to authority can be forced, honor is always a choice. I could make my children clean up their rooms, but I could not make them like it or me. Biblical accountability is about obedience from a heart of honor or about honor that leads to obedience.

PARTS OF THE ACCOUNTABILITY WHEEL

A healthy accountability system has three types of people in two layers of accountability. Types of accountability include Pauls who are empowering people, Barnabases who are encouraging people, and Timothys who are followers. You need these types of individuals in two levels or layers. Invasive people are those you have a personal relationship with who empower, encourage, and follow you. They know you and can do surgery on your soul or you can do surgery on theirs. Non-invasive are people who empower, encourage, or follow you but with whom you do not have a personal relationship.

What does a Paul look like?

A Paul is a leader you have chosen to follow—a person who influences, empowers and/or inspires you. He may be a model to emulate, a mentor, or a coach. He is a person you trust who has journeyed ahead of you in different areas of life. Examples may be pastors, advisors, inspirational writers, counselors, coaches, or sponsors. An invasive Paul would be a person who knows and can comment on the good, bad, and ugly of your life—your strengths and especially your weaknesses. He is a person who, when he disagrees with you, tears you up and drives you to your knees. When you feel this person is disappointed in you, it hurts. A non-invasive Paul would be a person or people who empower and challenge you from a distance, such as favorite authors, preachers, and teachers. You know them, but they do not know you from Adam.

Hebrews 13:17 (NIV) Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

What does a Barnabas look like?

Barnabas means “Son of Encouragement.” This is the person who encourages and supports you, who empathetically relates to you. An example may be a co-worker, friend, or support group member. An invasive Barnabas would be one who relates and comforts you personally while a non-invasive person does the same without personally knowing you.

Proverbs 27:17 (NIV) As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NIV) Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: ¹⁰If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! ¹¹Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? ¹²Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

What does a Timothy look like?

A Timothy is a person you influence, inspire, and empower. It is someone to whom you convey knowledge and/or

wisdom—a person who respects and desires your opinions and advice and sees you as an example or model to follow. Examples of this may include students, younger or inexperienced friends, or an apprentice. An invasive Timothy would be the person who has given you permission to dialogue with them on a personal level while a non-invasive one would be the person that you empower but have no personal contact with, such as a person who reads your blogs or other writings. Most accountability in this area is chosen from the bottom up, not the top down. While you can choose your Pauls and Barnabases, Timothys must choose to surrender to your guidance.

One of the best illustrations of healthy accountability is a comparison between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. While the Sea of Galilee is teeming with life, the Dead Sea is not. The reason is that the Sea of Galilee has a healthy flow of water in and out—in from the surrounding mountains and out through the Jordan River. The Dead Sea, on the other hand, receives water from the Jordan River, but this water escapes only by evaporation, leaving a stagnant body of water filled with minerals and unable to sustain life. God created and saved us to be more like the Sea of Galilee than the Dead Sea, more like a conduit than a container. All that God gives and allows in our lives is for the purpose of raising us up to send us out—for us and then others. The world is starving for the Bread of Life; thus, we should be one beggar telling another beggar where The Bread is. According to the passages below, the comforted should comfort, the reconciled should reconcile, and the taught should teach.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (NIV) Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 (NIV) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Timothy 2:1-2 (NIV) You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

FLAT SPOTS

As a tire needs air pressure to stay inflated, healthy accountability needs individuals of each type and at both levels: invasive and noninvasive. If one area is lacking, it produces a flat spot. These flats spots are places where we are weak and may become susceptible to sin and a loss of integrity. For example, not having any Pauls in my life may lead to arrogance and the problems of David. Like David, if we have not empowered people to speak into our lives and to ask us the hard questions about what we are doing with our time, talents, and treasures, then gifts from God may become viewed as entitlements. A lack of Timothys may be a recipe for becoming a spoiled Christian with everything coming in and nothing going out. We absorb all the church can give without passing any of it on. Like spoiled teenagers, we want all the privileges but none of the responsibilities. Just like becoming a parent has a way of growing spoiled children into responsible adults, taking on a Timothy may be the critical step in the development of a Christian. Not only do we need people in front of us to guide us and behind us to follow us, we need people beside us to support us. Not having Barnabases in one's life will lead to burnout and a lack of productivity. Like Moses needed Aaron and Hur to hold up his arms so that Joshua could lead Israel to victory, we need someone to hold our arms up as we lead and help others.

Growth with integrity is maintained in part when every believer in every generation develops a healthy accountability system. The accountability system flows naturally through each part of the transformative structure, from one-on-one discipleship, to gender based groups, and to a church (small group). Because it permeates this cellular level, the culture maintains growth with integrity.