

The Man in the Mirror

Solving the 24 Problems Men Face

Accountability: The Missing Link

Unedited Transcript

Galatians 6:1-2, Philippians 2:3-4, Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, Proverbs 27:6

Good morning, men! Please open your Bibles to Galatians chapter 6. We'll begin this morning by doing a shout out. Today, we're going to recognize a group that's been meeting since 1989, Team Shaw Men of Faith of Shaw AFB Chapel in Sumter, SC. 6 men who meet at the AFB Club house every 3rd Saturday using the Video Bible Study. This military group of both retired and active duty Air Force and Army have been meeting since 1989. Led by William Oden, and we are looking for a man to join our Field Staff in the Sumter, SC area! I wonder if you would join me in giving a military welcome to the Team Shaw Men of Faith. One, two, three, hoorah! Yeah, good to have you with us men, thank you for joining us!

Why Men Need Accountability

The series is the Man in the Mirror. Today, we're going to be talking about Accountability: The Missing Link. The first thing I want us to talk about is why do men need accountability? Why do men need accountability? You have goals for your life. You want to lead a life that is Christ-like. In fact, Romans 8:29 says that, "Those whom God foreknew, He pre-destined to be conformed to the image of His Son Jesus." You and I are on a path towards Christ-likeness and intimacy with Him in spiritual maturity.

But, as you know, we have a tendency as men to get off track. None of us ever got off track intentionally. Nobody woke up this morning and thought to himself, "Today, I wonder what I can do to mess up my life." I used to play doubles tennis with a guy. He was my partner. Every time I would hit the ball into the net, which is frequent, he would get so upset with me, he says, "I can't believe you did that!" After the first few months of playing with him, I turned to him one time and I just said, "Look man, give me a break. Do you actually think I would ever intentionally hit the ball into the net?"

No. None of us are intentionally doing any of these things. The problem is, however, that we're prone to wander because we are like sheep. As we said in the video at the front end, there is a battle going on, you are being hunted. You're a sheep, you're being hunted, and isolation is a problem for someone who is being hunted. I mentioned it here before but, anybody who has ever watched the National Geographic Channel knows that the predator, the lion, never goes after the herd. The lion always goes after the one that's become isolated.

Isolation is a real problem. Men tend to become isolated more often than women because it's more in our nature to be loners. I'm not saying everybody, but it is more in our nature. It's a generalization but we use generalizations because they're generally true.

Generally speaking, men do tend to become isolated. When men become isolated, several things begin to happen. We begin to hear the voices of the culture. We begin to intermingle or intermarry with the culture. We tend to start doing what seems right in our own eyes because we're just living by our own best thinking. We tend to exchange the truth of God for a lie, the Glory of God for an idol. We tend to start seeking the god or the gods that we want instead of the God who is. We end up becoming cultural rather than Biblical Christians. We become lukewarm in our faith.

The goal is a good goal. It's what we all want, but because of these things that we have to encounter, we have these results when we live in isolation. Let me give an example how this plays out. Four couples, all in the same church, and over a period of about 12 months, these four husbands all had moral failures. They were all unfaithful to their wives. Strip clubs, adultery, addiction to pornography, solicitation of prostitutes, that kind of thing. These are four Christian guys in churches. Now, scroll forward, about 18 months, two of these marriages have been restored and two of the marriages have ended in ugly divorces with fierce custody battles, really messy divorces.

What do you think was the difference in these two sets of two? What was different is that in the two men who ended up going through terrible divorces with ugly custody battles and so forth, is that those men were only on the fringe of the church. Those men lived in isolation. Those men were putting in a performance, if you will, but they were really secretly just doing what they wanted to do, living by their own ideas, because they had no one to whom they were given an account for their lives. They have no discipleship in their lives.

But the two men who are restored, it's terrible what they did and put their spouses and families through, but those two men who had their families and marriages restored, those men had some brothers in their lives who said, when those guys said, "I'm checking out. I can't do this anymore. I'm leaving my wife. I'm leaving my family." They got up in their faces and said, "No you're not! You're not going anywhere!"

In one case, one of the men was addicted to pornography. The men that he was in relationships with in the church, they showed up at his house. They knocked on the door. He answered the door. They walked right by him. They went in, they seized his computer. Ended up putting some filtering software on it and he says, "That's not the answer." But that's one of the things they did to express their love and their concern for him.

Now let's look at the text, Galatians chapter 6 verse 1. "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should shame them and make them feel unwelcome, and never again have anything to do with them." No, no, this is not a text about what often happens. This is a text about what Jesus wants us to do. Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him, gently. But watch yourself or you also may be tempted. This is the whole Bible thing. Carry each other's burdens. Put yourself in somebody else's shoes. How would you want to be handled? Were it you that were getting off track, you would want somebody to try to restore you, to try to restore you gently, to deal kindly with you. Somebody who would help you carry your burden.

In this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ. The law of Christ is the royal command, love one another. Now turn to Philippians chapter 2 verse 3, a few pages to the right. "Do nothing out of selfish ambitions or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves." Then, this is the part to drill down on. "Each of you should look not only to you own interests, but also to the interest of others."

There's a mandate in the Bible, the law of love is a mandate to care about other people, to care about what's happening to them. Turn with me to Ecclesiastes chapter 4, verse 9. There's a passage in Proverbs 27:6, it's on your sheet. "The kisses of an enemy may be profuse but faithful are the wounds of a friend." Then the passages in Ecclesiastes says this, "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 isolated man." The man in isolation. What should be your feeling towards the man who has isolated himself? Disdain, utter disdain. How could he do that? No, pity him.

If you're in isolation, we all feel so sorry for you. We pity you, we pity you because that's what the scriptures tell us to do. Pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up. That's what happened to the two men whose marriages blew up. They had no one to help them up.

We're talking about why men need accountability. Men need accountability because this is how you stay on track. This is how you stay on track. The big idea for the day, **accountability means to be regularly answerable to qualified people for each of the key areas of our lives.** This is a definition that we worked out here in this Bible study, before I even wrote the Man in the Mirror. This is like a good de facto definition for accountability, is to be regularly answerable to qualified people for each of the key areas of our lives.

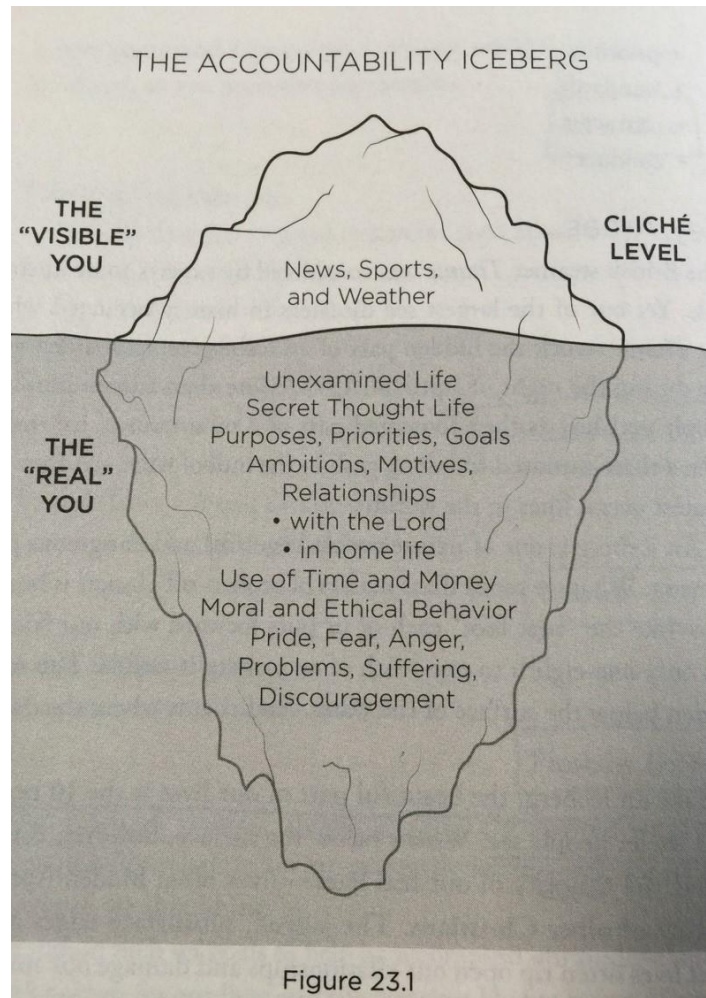
What does it look like in practice?

Now, let's take a look at what that looks like and practice. What does accountability look like in practice? Accountability should be understood. It's a tool, it's a tool. It's a spiritual discipline. Spiritual disciplines are spiritual habits that we develop to help us keep on track with the Lord. I don't know of any spiritual discipline more valuable than this one.

The idea of, "Sure, being in the word of God, absolutely top. Intimacy with Christ, again, absolutely." But to be in relationship with some other brothers who are helping me stay on track, this is something that is supreme in the area of spiritual disciplines. The first thing, let's just talk about the word "answerable", what it means to be answerable, what it means to give an account. We don't need to talk about that. Any of you who have a job know what it means to be answerable.

Even if you own your own shop, your own business, you still have to answer to investors or to customers, to clients, everybody is answerable. Think about how naïve it is to think that we would be answerable to a temporal boss and unanswerable to our eternal king. It makes no sense. When you think about money, all the benefits of money are temporal, all the risks of money are eternal. Accountability you could say the same thing. A lack of accountability, in the temporal world, the risks are minor. But when you start talking about the state of your soul, different story.

Then, to the key areas. Accountability means to be answerable, to qualified people for each of the key areas. In the book, we got this figure, this accountability iceberg. The idea is that most men out in the general community are living their lives at the cliché level, news, sports and weather, maybe tools and maybe some cars. But that's where most men are living their lives. But then the real you, the 90% of what's below the water line in the iceberg, that's your real life, that's the real you, the unexamined life, the secret life. We're talking about these things through the weeks. Your purpose, priorities, goals, your ambitions, your relationships, time and money, your morals, your emotions, your sufferings, all of these things, that's who you are.



The question is, for all of us, are you talking about these things? If you're not talking about these things, guess what? You are living in isolation. To push the analogy a little bit, you're underwater in those areas. That can translate to a very useful tool in this weekly one hour accountability checkup card.

This is organized. There are lots of different ways to organize the key areas of your life but this has withstood the test of time, organizing the key areas according to your different roles and how you actually spend your time. I'm going to take the unusual step of asking you to have one of these cards in your hand and we're going to read through every word of this card together.

On the front, it says the weekly one hour accountability checkup. Use these questions as a guide. It is not necessary to ask every question but be sure to cover every area each week. Questions to start, icebreakers. How has God blessed this week? What went right? What problem consumed your thoughts this week? What went wrong? That just gets the conversation lubricated, okay.

Then you'll notice the big picture, the shaded areas are spiritual life, home life, work life, ministry, critical concerns, then a prayer. Let's look at spiritual life. Notice on the spiritual life, the bolded headers are God's word, prayer temptation, confession and church.

The Weekly One-Hour Accountability Checkup

Use these questions as a guide. It is not necessary to ask every question, but be sure you cover each area every week.

Questions to Start

- ▶ How has God blessed this week? What went right?
- ▶ What problem consumed your thoughts this week? What went wrong?

Spiritual Life

- ▶ **God's Word:** Have you read it consistently? (How often? How long? Why not? Will you next week?)
- ▶ **Prayer:** Describe your prayers for yourself, others, praise, worship, confession, gratitude. How is your relationship with Christ evolving?
- ▶ **Temptation:** How were you tempted this week? How did you respond?
- ▶ **Confession:** Do you have unconfessed sin?

Church

- ▶ Church: Did you worship in church this week? Was your faith in Jesus strengthened?

Home Life

- ▶ **Wife:** If applicable, how is it with your wife? (time, meaningful conversation, attitudes, intimacy, disappointments, irritations, her relationship with Christ)
- ▶ **Children:** If applicable, how are your children? (giving encouragement, quantity and quality time, values, education, spiritual welfare)
- ▶ **Finances:** How are your finances doing? (debt, sharing, saving, spending, stewardship)
- ▶ **Time:** Have you given your time to the ones who deserve it?

Work Life

- ▶ **Job:** How are things going? (career, relationships, temptations, stress, problems, working too much)

Ministry Life

- ▶ **Making Disciples:** What have you done this week to (1) *call* someone to live "in" Christ—salvation or abide, (2) *equip* them to live "like" Christ—grow or train, or (3) *send* them to live "for" Christ—make disciples, love, serve others.
- ▶ **Witness:** How have you shared your faith?
- ▶ **Service:** What have you done for someone else this week that can't be repaid? (the poor, encouragement, mercy, service to others)

Critical Concerns

- ▶ **God's Will:** Do you feel you are in the center of God's will and sense His peace?

Thought Life: What secret are you wrestling with?

Priorities: Are your priorities in the right order?

Integrity: How is your moral and ethical behavior?


High Risk: How are you doing in your personal high-risk area?

Transparency: Are the "visible you" and the "real you" consistent in your relationships? (If not, in what ways?)

Faithfulness: Have you been faithful in the key areas above? If not, what's your plan?

Prayer

- ▶ Close with ten to fifteen minutes of prayer. Focus on concerns of the week.



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Figure 23.2

God's word. Have you read it consistently? How often? How long? Why not? Will you next week? Now, you have to see right away that you have to be a humble person or willing to be a humble person to let somebody get in your grill about stuff like this.

Prayer. Describe your prayers for yourself. Others, praise, worship, confession, gratitude, how is your relationship with Christ evolving? Temptation. How were you tempted this week? How did you respond?

Confession, do you have un-confessed sin? Church, did you worship in church this week? Was your faith in Jesus strengthened? These are useful questions for you to be challenged with, inspired with, and called to give an answer for.

Home life, wife. If applicable, how is it with your wife? Time, meaningful conversation, attitudes, intimacy, disappointments, irritations, her relationship with Jesus Christ, children. If applicable, how are

your children? Giving encouragement to them, quantity and quality of time, values education, and spiritual effort.

Finances. How are your finances going? Debt sharing, savings, spending. Time, have you given your time to the ones who deserve it? Back side, another key area, work life. Heading is job, how are things going? Career, relationships temptations, stress problems, working too much. Are you getting the idea that on this little business card are all the questions that you need or would want to get the right answers to?

Ministry life, making disciples. This is the big change, if you're using the former version of the card. Making disciples. What have you done this week to: Number one, call someone to live in Christ, salvation or abide; Number two, equip them to live like Christ to grow or train them; or number three, send them to live for Christ to make disciples love and serve others.

Witness. How have you shared your faith? Service, you don't need to be doing everything, every week. Not only do you not need to be answering every question every week. You don't need to be doing all this every week either but the point is that, these are all the rubrics that you will want to make sure, that we all want to make sure that we have covered.

Service. What have you done for someone else this week that can't be repaid, the poor encouragement mercy service to others. Critical concerns, rubrics, God's will. Do you feel you're in the center of God's will and sends His peace? There's a seminal question.

Thought life. What secret are you wrestling with? This would be like from last message on Priorities. Are your priorities in the right order?

Integrity. How is your moral and ethical behavior? High risk. How are you doing in your personal high risk area? That might be, you might be a credit card junkie, you might have a gambling problem, you might have same sex attraction, you might be an alcoholic or a drug addict or you might be into pornography, your personal high-risk area. When you develop a trusting accountable relationship, these are the kinds of things that you want to have somebody pushing you a little bit.

These are the kinds of things that, even those four men, they didn't have anybody in their life asking them these questions, pushing them on this. Now, the two guys that had their marriages saved, in the end, the guys that were in this group, they did the right thing. But if it had been an accountability group from the beginning, you have to wonder would that have gotten that far.

Transparency. Are the visible you and the real you, as we saw in the iceberg, consistent in your relationships? If not, in what ways? Faithfulness. Have you been faithful in the key areas above? In other words, if you just lied, and if not, what's your plan?

Prayer. Close within the 15 minutes of prayer. Focus on the concerns of the week. I've never read through the card before from beginning to end. But isn't it amazing? I gave his card to one of my close friends right after it was developed. I said, "Would you take a look at this and give me your opinion?" It wasn't finalized yet, I guess.

He sat there and he read it over just like we read it now, but he read it to himself. Flipped it over, he read the back. Then he just sat there staring at the card for what seemed like a long time, probably a

couple of minutes. He got moisture in his eyes. He said, "Isn't it interesting that everything we need to know to keep our life on track will fit on the front and back of a business card?"

Think about that men. Everything you need to monitor, to work on, to keep on track, everything you need will fit on the front and the back of a business card. My goodness! To be answerable, to give an account for each of these key areas, on a regular basis! How many of you play golf? Now, of those of you who play golf, how many of you play golf regularly? Now, of those who do play regularly, how many of you have a standing game? I've done this with lots of different groups over the years. The guys that have a regular standing golf game or a tennis game or whatever it is, they tend to have it scheduled into the counter. It's very infrequent that you will find men who regularly do a sport that don't have a standing game. So it is with accountability, to do this regularly, to have it scheduled in, that it's sacrosanct that you will not violate it. I did this for 32 years once a week with a guy, one of our former table leaders who is now deceased, 32 years, once a week. But it was an appointment that everybody that I work with, they understood you do not schedule over this appointment.

In the early days, people are pushing on it to see if I really mean it, to do it regularly. Then, finally, these qualified people, I just say this, you're not looking for a spiritual boss, you're looking for a fellow pilgrim. Try to have accountability with your wife in as many areas as possible. Never have accountability with another woman because the risks and the temptations are too great. There are a few other things which you can read about in the book. The big idea is this for the day. Accountability means to be regularly answerable to qualified people for each of these key areas in our lives.

Getting started...

How do you get started? Men, my own experience has been over all these years that really, about 15% is roughly the stick rate on men who will do accountability. I'm well aware that after this morning that probably 85% of you, you're going to say, "Wow! That was great. That's exactly what I need." Then, you're not going to do it. I understand that.

But, for the 15% of you who do want to build more accountability into your life, and I urge you to be part of the 15%. You need to understand that this is not going to happen just because it's a really, really good idea. This is not going to happen just because it's really, really important. This is not going to happen just because you really, really now know what to do. Get a group together, meet once a week, go over the card, okay. It's not going to happen for those reasons. It's going to happen because you, right now, make a decision that you are going to form an accountability group. I recommend four people, no less than three, certainly not two. Two men will lead each other astray from time to time. It's happened here. Three-Four men, five, you're pressing the limits. The problem with five men is that you just don't have enough air time for every man each week. Four guys, maybe three, now you know what to do.

You make the decision that you're going to do this right now. Let me say this, if you want to do this, if you're among the 15% that want to do this, you need to decide to do this, that you're going to do this right now because if you walk out through that door and you have not already made the decision that you're going to do it, you're not going to do it. That's just the way it is.

Now, okay, so maybe you're the exception to the rule. I don't think so. If you want to do this, go ahead and make it happen. Psalm 139 verses 23 and 24, we looked at last week. "Search me oh God and know

my heart. Test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out any offensive way in me and lead me in Your everlasting way." That's going to work better if do it with some brothers.

If you could have done all of the things that we talked about and manage all the key areas of your lives that we talked about this morning the way that you wanted to manage them, guess what, it would have already happened by now. Open yourself up, get some other brothers, open yourself up, do the accountability, which is to be regularly answerable for each of the key areas of our lives to qualified people. That will help you meet the goal of this Christ-likeness, becoming more Christ-like, more intimacy with Him, to be more spiritually mature. The goals that we set at the very beginning of the message that we all have in common. There's nothing that I would ever recommend to you than I will recommend more than this one thing. Let us pray.

Closing Prayer

Our dearest Father, we all really do have the same goals. I just pray for these men, Lord, that each of them would be able to figure out how You want them to respond to this message. I usually don't even come on strong as I did this morning for a particular course of action but, Lord I just, I know what this has meant in my life and I just hope the same thing for every man here. Many of these men Lord are ready because we've talked about this many times over the years. Many of these men, far more than 15%, in this group, already have this accountability. But for those men who are online, maybe just hearing about this for the first time, or somebody new here who really hasn't thought deeply about who's holding them to give an answer for the eternal parts of their life. I just pray God that You would draw them into a humble response and a desire to have You search them with the help of some accountability partners. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.