



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Acts 1 – 12 Sermon Series

Supports Session 6: Accountable

Sermon Title: “Steps for Accountability” (Matthew 18:15-20)

Connection to Session 6

Today’s group lesson was based upon the fact that God holds believers accountable for our motives in service. As much as we would all like to be perfect and never need to be held accountable, we know that each of us will need this at some point. Jesus, in His infinite wisdom, knew this and provided the steps we need to take when holding a brother or sister in Christ accountable for our motives in service.

Introduction/Opening

We all remember the child’s game of connect the dots. Our parents would give us a piece of paper with the numbers 1-100 on it. Our goal was to connect all the numbers in the proper order. If we did not connect the numbers in the proper order, or if we missed a number or two, the picture was not what it was supposed to be. In a similar way, Jesus provided a set of steps His followers are to take when holding each other accountable. We would be wise to follow these three steps in proper order and then trust Him for the outcome.

Outline

- I. **Step One: A One-On-One Conversation (v. 15).** How many of us have had a friend inform us about a wardrobe malfunction? Yes, it was embarrassing in the moment, but it would have been much worse for us the longer it went unnoticed. Yes, we probably turned red in the face, but we knew that our friend truly cared because he said something to us. We were also grateful that our friend whispered it in our ear as opposed to shouting it across the room. As soon as we fixed the malfunction, we thanked the friend for the private conversation.

It is safe to say that all of us would agree that sinning against a brother or sister in Christ is a little more than a wardrobe malfunction. Yet, we do not want to say anything out of fear of hurting them. Not saying something is what would cause the greater harm. Jesus provided a simple first step and that is the command to let our brothers and sisters know about the sin we see in their lives. We are not to make a public showing of this. Nor are we to make it personal. Instead, we are to go to them in private and let them know how they are deviating from God’s Word. As we learned

last Sunday, we sin against God, so we need to point our brothers and sisters back to God and His Word.

II. Step Two: Take Two or Three Witnesses (v. 16). Many of us would agree that accountability is not easy, and it is usually a process. Jesus knew this to be the case and, therefore, provided additional steps in this journey. If a change in the sinful pattern is not had, Jesus said that we are to take two or three witnesses with us for a second conversation. The witnesses are not there to serve as an attack squad as the one being confronted can become defensive. Instead, the witnesses can serve as prayerful support throughout the conversation.

So, why would Jesus want us to take witnesses with us? When we were children, it was common for one of our parents to lovingly point out something we had done wrong. If, however, we had both parents sit down with us, we knew that something big was going to take place. Our parents, if done correctly, did not berate us or make us feel worse than we already did. They would sit us down because of their love for us and walk us through what they were seeing wrong in us.

A church is intended to operate like a family. If we approach someone in a one-on-one and change is not had, we are not to give up on that church member. Instead, we are called to take additional, loving steps. When two or three more church members get involved in the process, the one trapped in sin should realize he or she is loved beyond measure, and everyone wants what is best. Once again, if we truly love the church member caught in sin, we will seek to hold that member accountable to the standards outlined in God's Word.

III. Step Three: Go Before the Church (v. 17). Outside of the twelve disciples, with whom did Jesus spend a great deal of His time? The answer is Gentiles and tax collectors. Why did He spend so much time with them? He answered this question when He said He came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). Jesus came to this earth not to shun Gentiles and tax collectors, but rather to share the gospel message with them and offer a path to repentance.

According to Jesus, when someone refuses to listen to even a small group, we are to take this before the church. If the person still refuses to listen, we are to view this person as a Gentile or tax collector. Jesus is not telling us to shun them and make them feel even worse than what they are most likely feeling. Instead, we are to do the exact opposite. When we view someone as a Gentile or tax collector, we see them as someone in need of Jesus. Instead of pushing them away, we seek to draw closer so that they can truly know and experience the love of Jesus.

Conclusion

While accountability is not easy, we know that it is necessary. Holding someone accountable to the standards outlined in God's Word is not about being judgmental. God is the ultimate judge, and He does not need our help in this. Holding a fellow church member accountable is about loving that person enough to point them back to the truth found in God's Word. When we do this, we are being obedient to God's commands and trusting Him for the results. This does not mean it always turns out the way we would want. But we are not responsible for the outcome. We are only responsible for being obedient to apply God's Word.

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