



CONNECT
with **GOD**
ACCOUNTABILITY

CONNECT *with* GOD

INTRODUCTION

All relationships aren't created equal. We relate to different people in different ways, depending on our chemistry with them and the purpose or goal of the relationship. Most of the people in our lives fall into one of four types of relationships:

Public (lots of people are in this category)

Connections through outside influences like a shared taste in music or a love of the same sports team

Social (for most of us, 50 or fewer people are in this category)

First-impression relationships based on surface-level interactions; acquaintances but not necessarily friends

Personal (20 or so people fall into this category—maybe fewer)

Closer connections forged through shared experiences and feelings; friends

Intimate (this category is usually comprised of 3 or 4 people)

Real and raw connections; inner-circle friends

These relationships happen through our most closely shared experiences and feelings.

Even most of our Christian relationships fall into either the social or personal categories. **But it's important that we're intentional about forming intimate relationships. Why?** Because it's in the context of these deep connections with other believers that we can practice accountability.

Accountability is when we tell the most trusted people in our lives the things about us that we're tempted to keep secret and that fester into shame. We give these people permission to offer us wisdom, call us to a higher standard of being, and lovingly challenge our unhealthiest instincts.

This special kind of community—built on transparency and vulnerability—can break the power of sin in our lives by doing two things:

1. Unburdening us from the weight of secret sin

Secrets poison our souls. They allow sin to maintain control of our lives. But when we trust people enough to reveal the sins we're most tempted to keep secret, we find freedom. We're able to grow in ways that wouldn't be possible if we kept quiet and allowed that sin to turn into shame or self-loathing.

2. Helping us to avoid sin

Opening up about what's really going on in our lives doesn't just help us resolve feelings of past shame or regret. It empowers us to avoid sin moving forward. Sin is at its most powerful when it's hidden. Bring it into the light, work it out in community with people you trust and love, and it loses its power to control you.

CONNECT *with* GOD

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

If you're in a group, use these questions to have a conversation about how you can support and encourage one another as you explore accountability. If you're not in a group, reflect on these questions to help you consider what it would look like for you to connect with God through accountability.

1. Think about the relationships in your life. Write down some names of people who fit into each type of relationship discussed on the previous page:

Public	Social
Personal	Intimate

2. Wise people tell us what we *need* to hear, not what we *want* to hear. In the space below, list the names of people whom you can trust to give you wise counsel.
3. Are any of the people you listed in the previous question already in the list of intimate relationships from Question #1? If not, what could you do to begin to move someone into that category?
4. Will you take a step toward pursuing the spiritual practice of accountability by reaching out to one or more of those people? Initiate a conversation. It will probably be a little awkward, but it'll be worth it in the end.

CONNECT *with* GOD

TIPS FOR PRACTICING ACCOUNTABILITY

The idea of initiating an accountability relationship to help you grow spiritually can seem weird and intimidating. But we benefit from these types of relationships in other areas of our lives all the time. You're more likely to succeed in running a marathon if you train with partners. You're more likely to advance in your career if you have trusted people in your worklife who can give you honest feedback about your strengths and weaknesses.

Inviting outside perspectives is essential to growing in your relationship with God. Setting up those relationships will require some vulnerability, but it'll be worth it. Follow these steps to get moving in the right direction:

1. Find someone you trust that has similar goals to your own.

Remember this is an accountability relationship, not a mentor relationship. You want someone who can offer you a healthy perspective and provide accountability. But you also want to do the same for them. This person is not your boss, pastor, or guru. They're a partner on a shared growth journey.

2. Talk to them about your goals.

Be specific. Make sure they understand you want to grow spiritually and that accountability is a key ingredient for growth.

3. Talk about how the accountability relationship would work.

Be specific about being able to open up about sin, finding (and offering) support instead of judgment, and experiencing the kind of accountability that breaks sin's power over your life.

4. If they agree, decide when, where, and how often you'll meet.

Begin to open lines of communication so you can support and encourage each other.