



Biblical Framework for the accountability of our Pastoral Team and Eldership:

My friends and fellow leaders, I'm writing this letter to provide insight and clarity on the issue of accountability, but first let me say that I truly value that role that you fulfill in establishing this awesome body of believers which is Hope City House of Prayer. As the Lord continues to bless the work of our hands, I think it's important to define and outline what we mean by "accountability". It is a word that is loosely used and rarely understood or implemented. As we aim to be good stewards of the grace of God and the calling to lead His people, I want to share some ideas that will help us not only understand what is meant by accountability, but in practical terms, how we apply it at Hope City. let's face it. If a leaders accountability isn't in the local church, it's probably not real accountability. I have many people in my life who have always been voices of clarity, discernment and accountability but as it relates to the unique role of Pastor at Hope City, we need to move forward with understanding on this issue. I trust you all and have no assumptions of malpractice or heresy. Without having localized and internal accountability, we can easily give the illusion of accountability as we utilize the vocabulary without the entanglements of the substance. Here's the problem: Not everyone is clear on what they mean when they use the word "accountability." Let me suggest four values we should seek to experience in accountability within a plurality of elders in a local church: intentionality, self-disclosure, approachability, and appeal. Below we'll look a bit at each of these values. But first, there's one overarching principle we must never overlook. The secret underlying the kind of loving accountable relationships where elders grow more in love with Jesus, their families, and their ministry, is humility. – Pastor Brian

Engine-Lubricating Oil

Humility is the oil that lubricates the engine of plurality, by "plurality" I'm referring to the biblical model of leadership that we hold at Hope City House of Prayer. Although our responsibilities and roles different in some respects, to fully understand the need for accountability, we need to understand the inter-related dynamic of leadership structure and leadership effectiveness. If you consider all of the options that God could have chosen for governing churches, I suspect he chose plurality or a team model because he loves humility. A collaborative model reads beautifully in sermons and on websites, but often the greatest hinderance to effective implementation is accountability which necessitates humility, teamwork can't work, without humility. In the biblical model of plurality, God imposes a governing structure that can't be effective without embodying humble values. God loves unity, so he calls us to plurality where we must humbly persevere with one another to function effectively. God loves making us holy, so he unites us to men who will make us grow. God loves patience, so he imposes a way of governing that requires humble listening and a trust that God is working in the lives of others. God has decided the church will be governed in ways that value both the ends and also the means. That is, God values decision-making, but he also values the way we relate to each other in the process. We often think what's "best" in church polity is what's most efficient, easiest, or most effective way of doing something. Instead, God's best way is whatever

is the most beautiful way. The standard of beauty is God—the interplay of his own unity, diversity, and harmony. God throws together diverse people with different gifts who have strong opinions—and then insists upon their unity. This does not always look or feel “beautiful.” But God still charges elders to lead the church. As we lead, we are also called to grow in our exercise of authority as we remain mutually accountable and responsible to one another. The only hope for such a dynamic to exist in a group is for us to make humility our aim.

“But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.” (Isa. 66:2)

1. Intentionality

This means we will have some defined, regular, and consistent context in my life where people who know me can encourage us, pray for each other, and understand our patterns of temptation. It’s saying, “I love my spouse enough, my family enough, the church enough, and fear God enough, that I’m actually going to define the contexts for my accountability.” Rather than sharing in a generic manner, or in vague generalities, or using amoral words to remove any sense of my own moral agency, I’m going to ensure they know me all the way down to where I’m most tempted. This way they can pray for me, encourage my growth, and ask how I’m doing. We must press down into all the areas that could potentially destroy our family or ministry—and define when and where these will be discussed. That’s intentionality.

2. Self-Disclosure

Self-disclosure brings forth humility by making it your responsibility to humbly open your soul to those to whom you are accountable. Fellow elders are not prosecuting attorneys cross-examining your life. Instead, you are a witness to your own life, sharing truthfully, freely, and happily with little or no provocation. In Christ, we have God’s self-disclosure ([John 1:18](#)). Jesus is God moving toward us making himself known. Self-disclosure stems from the incarnation by communicating that we too want to experience deep community. We move toward one another by making ourselves known first. The burden is on me to disclose my joys and struggles. This small distinction in how we view self-disclosure results in a far more gracious approach to accountability and respect of a fellow believer’s relationship with God. Behind this value is a confidence that God’s work in our lives propels us toward an honest life before him and one another. Placing the accent on our disclosure creates an arrangement where accountability is not rigged to find sin or that places us in the role of the Holy Spirit. Rather, it’s transformed into a context to trust God’s Word and encourage the exercise of humility. When I make self-disclosure my responsibility, it’s easier for others to ask me questions about my soul, my marriage, my parenting, my ministry, or to share their heart for me.

3. Approachability

When we live humbly, agree with openness, and become more Christlike, we gain “passports” into others’ lives. This is an important concept for anyone who wants to experience genuine, meaningful, and fruitful accountability. Simply belonging to a group is not a passport into others’ lives. In my experience at Hope City, I would have to say this idea of “earning trust” has not been equally embraced as a value by all leaders and as a result what forms is “leadership cliques”, this is where we have essentially members of the congregation, selecting whom they will be open to rebuke from. This violate spiritual protocol and disables accountability in the church community at large. A passport authorizes you to enter and travel in a foreign land. Similarly, as we’re intentional, self-disclosing, and approachable with one another, we gain passports into the lives of the other people in our group. These “passports” are earned bestowals of trust that come when others feel they can trust us with their own self-disclosure and with the care of their souls amid their struggles. If you want to experience real accountability and helpful feedback from others, you will need to be known as one who is approachable and trustworthy. We must be uniform in the way that we respond to each other and the members of Hope City. Allegations of favoritism, bias, and selective compassion are with merit without this approach.

4. Appeal

This final value recognizes that accountability is hard and sometimes needs help. Maybe the experience of fellowship breaks down due to a conflict that can’t be resolved, or maybe one person in the group feels permanently labeled by something they’ve confessed. Maybe it’s something more serious: You seem to be caught in sin and the group feels unable to help, or your spouse feels trapped by some pattern of behavior you’re exercising in the home and just doesn’t know what to do. The value of appeal says, even before we start our group, we’re agreeing that a plea for help may be necessary, and we’re defining the person or group within the church to whom we will appeal. Appeal says that seeking outside help is not betrayal or slander, but is sometimes necessary when sinners are trying to help each other. Appeal says we are agreeing up front we will not allow our homes to become tightly controlled, closed systems; that our spouses can appeal to others for help if they feel the need. The value of appeal anticipates that sometimes we are blind and need help and in that moment, we are far less likely to want to seek it. So we agree now, to protect ourselves (and those we love) then. We must pursue humility. Elders need humility like engines need oil. Without our humility, breakdown is inevitable. An important way to pursue humility is through accountability so we must value accountability and learn to see it as a vital component in the life of a healthy church family.