

2015 Sovereign Grace South Central Regional Men's Conference
God's Man Accountable to God

And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Hebrews 4:13

Introduction

A couple years ago Covenant Eyes, an online ministry that provides an Internet accountability and filtering service, posted a blog entitled, "10 Reasons Why Accountability in the Church is Unpopular". The article began by highlighting a survey of Christians across the US, which revealed that; "only 5% of people say their church does anything to hold them accountable for integrating biblical beliefs and principles into their lives." It also observed that, "For those who are held accountable by their church community in some way, the most common approach to accountability is through a small group. But even so, among those who attend a small group, only 7% say accountability is one of the functions of their group." The article is commendable and delivered many insightful reasons why accountability can be challenging. However, it focused more on structures and how they should function, rather than the nature of accountability.

This discussion will focus more on the nature of accountability rather than structures of accountability. Various churches may employ different structures of accountability, but these structures can only be successful to the extent that the nature of biblical accountability is understood. Although we are grateful for structures, we should remember that they are limited, in that, they can only *facilitate* and not *create* accountability. Ultimately the Creator Himself established accountability.

More than anything else I want us to embrace the fact that Biblical accountability is God-centered.

This should be our orientation to the topic of accountability - accountability is *already established between the Creator and the creature, and the church serves by creating structures that facilitate that accountability.*

I. Why is it important to emphasize *Divine accountability* above *structures of accountability*?

1) Structures of accountability have severe limitations.

- They can be circumvented. Not so with Divine accountability (Psalms 139:7).
- They can't expose sin when there is a willingness to conceal it.
"And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve." Revelations 2:23

- 2) Structures of accountability, if wrongly emphasized, can erode personal responsibility.
- Take care not to invest too much responsibility in them. We want to be careful with statements such as, "My Small Group holds me accountable" or, "My accountability partner holds me accountable". Their limitations can ultimately serve as a temptation for you.
 - We can be tempted to blame the structures for failure.

II. Understanding this orientation changes the way we approach accountability.

- Accountability should no longer be considered optional.
- Accountability structures become desirable for support.

III. Taking advantage of your churches' accountability structures

As said earlier the church is responsible to provide context to facilitate our accountability to God. a context where conviction can be cultivated and where confession can be confidently made.

- The Scriptures delivers us to the *conviction of accountability* (Hebrews 4:12). In essence Scripture is an instrument of accountability. God's word reveals the character and nature of God that serves us by delivering a stark contrast to us. It unpacks us and discerns us. In short, it convicts us!
- The Savior delivers to the *confidence of accountability* (Hebrews 4:14-16). The ultimate goal of accountability for the believer is gracious assistance from the Savior! it avails us to the mediatorial work of our Great High Priest.

IV. Temptations to avoid concerning participation in accountability structures.

- Un-biblical demands upon the structure. "I need to grow more in relationship with members before I can open up"
- Fear of consequences. the Scriptures seem to always indicate that the consequences are redemptive! There is ultimately no such thing as a negative consequence when we walk in the light. John 3:20-21
- Pride. 1 John 1:5-10