

Called to Be Accountable

by Andy Stanley

Andy Stanley emphasizes the necessity of accountability in the Christian faith, highlighting its biblical foundation and practical implications for believers.

Duration: 41:49

Scripture: Proverbs 27:17, Matthew 18:15, Luke 17:3-5, Galatians 6:1, James 5:16

Topics: "Accountability"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of accountability in the Christian life. He argues that God does not expect us to struggle alone and that we all face the same temptations. The speaker shares personal examples of how he has sought accountability in his own life, including having multiple accountability partners. He also references a passage from Luke 17 that instructs believers to rebuke and forgive one another. The speaker suggests that the lack of accountability in society contributes to family breakdown and encourages listeners to embrace accountability in their own lives.

Transcript

One of the most significant things about Christianity and one of the things that sets it apart from other world religions is that our religion is very personal in nature. We serve a God who has allowed us to call Him our Heavenly Father. We have a Savior who said we are His brothers.

We have a Savior who said to His closest disciples that they were no longer His servants but that they could call Him friend. We have a God who is so personal in terms of our relationship that He described the church's relationship to Him in terms of a bridegroom and a bride. We don't have to have a mediator, the one who claimed to be our brother and our friend who died to show His love for us and who has become our Savior is also our mediator to God and that makes Christianity very, very, very unique among world religions because it's extremely personal.

We could even go so far as to say that our relationship with our God could be described as intimate and as we think through those family relationships that God has allowed us to compare with His relationship to us, we find that intimate is not too strong of a word and it's that very type of relationship that God desires with us, personal intimate. But on the other hand, nowhere in Scripture is it even implied that our relationship is to be private. Personal, yes.

Private, no. And by private I mean this, that my spiritual business is your spiritual business and that your spiritual business is my spiritual business. And what I want to talk about tonight is the whole issue of accountability because there's a tendency on our part to think I can be accountable in certain public areas of my life, but when it comes to my relationship with God, specifically when it comes to my struggles, when it comes to my failures, when it comes to my personal temptations, when it comes to the things I struggle with intimately and inside, that's just between me and God.

You know, you've heard it said me and God are majority, and that sounds good, and that sounds spiritual, but hopefully tonight I want to demonstrate to you from Scripture that that is very, very far from the truth. Your spiritual business is my spiritual business. My spiritual business is your spiritual business.

Accountability. Now, this isn't a new term. All of us live in situations and circumstances where we're accountable.

If you don't believe that, just bounce a few checks. The bank will send you a few letters because they will hold you accountable. At the same time, if the bank messes up your balance, you give them a call, and you hold them accountable.

Don't pay your electric bill, and you'll find that Georgia Power, whoever it is, will send you a letter and hold you accountable for the money you owe them. At the same time, if they turn off your electricity, you'll give them a call, and you'll hold them accountable. If you have a job, if you have employees, if you're an employer, you understand that every day in every area of life, people are holding us accountable.

If you have a roommate, if you're married, in every area of life, we're held accountable. I had a roommate before I got married, and both of us had mothers who loved us dearly, and therefore, as far as they got with us is getting dishes in the sink. I didn't really know what a dishwasher was for.

I thought they went in the sink, and magically, they appeared back in the cabinets. And we both thought that, so for the first week, dishes, you can imagine, piled up forever, and we realized that someone has to take those dishes and put them in the dishwasher. And this is how we held each other accountable.

My roommate was named Rick, and I'd be upstairs, and I'd hear Rick say, Andy? I'd say, yeah, Rick. He'd say, is your mom coming over this week? I said, I don't think so. He said, oh, and that meant, Andy, your dishes are still in the sink.

He held me accountable. My wife holds me accountable. The way she holds me accountable is, she sets the trash in front of the door, so that I have to trip over it to go downstairs to the car.

And that's her subtle way of saying, Andy, remember, this is your responsibility, and I'm holding you accountable. Pick up the trash and take it downstairs. In every area of life, you'll think about it, in every level of relationship, we're held accountable, and we have no problem with calling up people who owe us money and holding them accountable.

But all of a sudden, we get to our spiritual lives, and there's this tendency on our part to back off and say, well, this is different, because that's none of your business. Now, the bank, that's the bank and me, and we have our business, and the power company, Atlanta Gaslight, and all these areas. When it comes to my spiritual life, that's just between me and God, and that's nobody else's business.

And what I want you to understand tonight, more than anything else, is that there's no difference. That your spiritual business is my spiritual business, and that my spiritual business is your spiritual business, and that God has called us. As you'll see in a minute, God has commanded us to hold one another accountable in our spiritual lives, in our conduct, as we wrestle with sin, and as we wrestle with just the daily affairs of life.

Now, what do I mean by accountability? Let me give you a definition. If you're taking notes, I hope that you'll write this down, then I want to give you a few illustrations. We'll look at a couple of passages of scripture and wrap this thing up tonight.

But if you're taking notes, let me tell you exactly what I mean by accountability. By accountability, I mean this, giving a group or individual permission, giving a group or individual permission to question you concerning one or more areas of your life. Giving a group or individual permission to question you concerning one or more areas of your life.

Giving a group or individual permission to question you concerning one or more areas of your life. And secondly, committing yourself to total honesty with that group or individual. Secondly, committing yourself to total absolute honesty with that group or individual.

I'll give you some illustrations. I've Sandra to ask me several times a week if I've had my quiet time. You think, Andy, you're in the ministry.

You should have. I thought ministers had to have their quiet time. I thought it was part of the job descriptions.

No, it's not. I need somebody to say to me, Andy, have you had your quiet time? To remind me to hold me accountable. I have a group of 12 high school students that hold me accountable every week as to whether or not I've memorized a particular verse of scripture.

I've said to them on Sunday when we get together, ask me, Andy, did you memorize your verse of scripture? And I know as I go through the week that coming up Sunday, 12 high school students are going to say to me, Andy, did you memorize your verse of scripture? I have given them permission to hold me accountable in that area. But this goes much deeper than simply spiritual disciplines. I have another friend, and before I was married, I used to travel a lot and have to stay in hotels by myself, which I hated.

And he's in a business where he has to travel a lot and stay in hotels by himself, which he hates. And we both realized that the worst thing about it was you had lots of time, nothing to do, and a big square box over there saying, turn me on, turn me on, come on, turn me on. And on top was this cardboard thing that told you about all the movies that were on there that you shouldn't see.

And one day I was talking to my accountability partner. I said, you know, I said, I have a real difficult time with it. I said, I hate to travel by myself because of that constant temptation.

So we came up with a deal. When he gets back from a trip, I say to him, and I call his name, I said, did you watch movies you shouldn't watch? And he answers me, and then I say, did you just lie to me? And when I get back from trips where I've had to stay by myself in hotels, he asked me the same thing. You know why? Because I need someone to hold me accountable.

It's not that one of you asked me, it's I've given him permission. Here's an area of my life that I have a struggle in, and I want you to hold me accountable in this area. That's what I'm talking about when I talk about accountability.

The idea of asking someone, one or several people, to say in this particular area of my life, in this particular relationship, I know I shouldn't be in this relationship. Every time I think I'm going to get out, I change my mind. I need someone to hold me accountable in this relationship.

I need someone to hold me accountable in this specific area of spiritual discipline in my life to make sure I'm consistent. That's what I'm talking about, accountability. Giving someone, an individual or a group of people, permission.

Permission. You've given them permission to stick their nose in your spiritual business. That's what it really boils down to.

Because my spiritual business is your business, and your spiritual business is mine. Now what I want to talk about primarily tonight, is I want to demonstrate to you why I know this is true. We're going to talk about something Jesus said.

We're going to talk just a little bit about the body of Christ. And then I'm just going to give you some common sense reasons why you and I need to be involved in accountability relationships. I think this is one of the three most overlooked principles in all of Scripture.

And the reason is because we live in a society of self-made people and success stories. And I rose from the bottom and this is what I've done. And when it comes to our spiritual life, somehow we want to build a fence around our lives and say, hey this is between me and God.

I'm working it out. I don't need anybody sticking their nose in my business. And I want you to know tonight that if that's your attitude, you're living in disobedience to God.

And I'm not trying to come on heavy. You're going to see in just a minute what Jesus said. But worse than that, the consequences.

I think what we're seeing in our families today, and what we're seeing in our society in terms of family breakup, is a direct outcome of no accountability in our personal lives. That we can just kind of, you know, be, you know, our own little cowboys and do what we want, live the way we want. When we're tired of this, we move on from one thing to another.

And nobody asks us about anything. And as I've talked to our high school students and I've talked to some college students about this whole idea of accountability, they always come back with something I know you'll say, but there's something on the inside of us that just struggles with, but that's really none of my business, is it? Yes, it's your business. I want you to turn to Luke chapter 17.

We're going to look at a passage here, and then one in 1st Corinthians, and hopefully convince you of this. And then talk about some ways you can apply this in your own life. If you have your Bibles, please turn to Luke chapter 17.

I have a friend who I've asked, given permission to question me on anything concerning my finances, because I'm pretty dumb when it comes to money. And I need somebody to hold me accountable. And I

don't dare make a major financial decision without first going to this guy and saying, hey, what do you think about this? And I've said to him, when you see me making a mistake, don't even wait for me to ask.

Just come knocking on my door and say, Andy, you're making a mistake. I've asked him, hold me accountable in that area. I have another friend.

I have five accountability partners. I need lots of accountability. I have one guy.

I've said, anything you want. My life's an open book. When you see me headed off down the wrong road, don't wait for me to ask your advice.

Come knocking on my door and say, Andy, I think you're making a mistake in this area. I've given them permission to stick their nose in my business. Now, this is an amazing passage.

And I'm not going to preach this passage, because this is a whole different point. In fact, if you think what I'm going to say tonight seems extreme, wait till you see what Jesus says. Verse 1. Now, let's start with verse 3. Luke 17, verse 3. Command.

Be on your guard. If your brother sins, rebuke him. And if he repents, forgive him.

Now, how many of you have applied the first part of that very consistently? If your brother sins, rebuke him. Do you know what we do in Christianity when our brother sins? We talk about him. And then when he walks in the room, we act like nothing's wrong.

Then he leaves, and we talk about him. We say, you know, so-and-so's really having problems in their marriage. And we tell prayer requests.

You know, we share prayer requests. Everybody's praying for this person. No one's talking to this person.

We're just praying for this person. And everybody shares about everybody else's problem. And then somebody says, well, have you talked to him? Oh, no, it's none of my business.

Jesus says, yes, it is your business. Don't pray. Rebuke him.

Command. Then he goes on. And if he sins against you seven times a day and returns to you seven times saying, I repent, forgive him.

And then look what the Apostles said. If you have an NIV, they make this a new paragraph. It shouldn't be.

And if you have a New American Standard, they highlight verse 5 in black. It's dark black. That means they start a new paragraph.

This should not be a new paragraph. New paragraphs don't start with the word and. Look how the Apostles respond to what Jesus said.

And the Apostle said to the Lord, Lord, increase our faith. Now, the reason that most of the publishers started this a new paragraph, because what the Apostles say doesn't seem to relate at all to what Jesus just said. So they think, well, I guess we're changing the subject.

But here's what's happening. Jesus out of the blue. Imagine if he came here tonight and said, from now on, if you see a Christian sinning, rebuke him.

Now, you don't look at Jesus and say, no, we're not going to do that one. What else you have? I mean, you don't, you don't, you don't say that to Jesus. So the Apostles are walking around with this guy.

They're convinced by this time he's a Messiah. And he says, when your brother sinned, just rebuke him. And this is a strong word.

This is the very same word in Luke. If you study this word in Luke, when Jesus rebuked the wind, same word. When Jesus spoke to demons, he rebuked them.

When Jesus healed somebody, it says he rebuked their fever. This is a powerful, powerful word. It's like confront them, say something, do whatever it takes to change their behavior.

Get involved in the situation. And Jesus takes this same word and applies it to my relationship with you and your relationship with me. He says, if you see your brother sin, rebuke him.

And the Apostles, they didn't know what to say. So they said, Oh Lord, increase our faith. That's why, in other words, they couldn't say, okay.

They weren't about, I mean, that's big time. They weren't about to say, no, we don't want to do that. So you know what they said? What we do? Oh, this is how we say it.

Boy, that was really deep. That isn't, there's no commitment, is it? Pastor, that was a, that was a deep sermon. That doesn't mean, Pastor, I'm going to do something about it.

It doesn't mean, Pastor, you were wrong. It just means I got to say something. Boy, that was a great sermon.

And you walk out the door and forget it. So they said, boy, that was good. Boy, Lord, increase our faith.

Lord, I hope someday we're at the point where we can apply something like that. And then he goes on. Someday we'll talk about this passage because it's great.

But here's what I want you to see from this verse. The first reason that you need to get involved in accountability with other brothers and sisters in Christ is because Jesus commands it. Now, what I'm asking you to do tonight isn't this extreme.

Because I don't, I wouldn't dare preach a sermon like that. There's too many questions that come up. Well, how do you rebuke? And when do you rebuke? And do you like stand at the door and say, you, and you, could you come over here and group rebuke? Or, you know, I mean, we could spend the rest of our life walking around trying to rebuke other Christians in trouble.

I mean, you could stand on the highway, you know, and point at them and, you know, write notes and send them. We saw you speeding. I mean, there's plenty.

It could go on and on and on, right? The day I drove up next to one of my Christian brothers who I love dearly, and he was driving slow on the highway, and I was driving slow, and I just hate to drive slow. And he pulled over and waved me up beside him, rolled down his window. He said, I hate driving this slow.

I said, I do too. I just hate it. It's hard sometimes.

But if you and I got in this whole thing of just rebuke, I don't, I don't really know, to be honest, how to apply that passage. So, I'm not going to preach on rebuke. But this is what I want you to understand.

Jesus, Jesus taught that you and I are accountable for our behavior to one another. I would have said to Jesus, but Jesus, my brother's sin is none of my business. And Jesus would have said, yes, it is your business.

If your brother is sinning, talk to him. So, at least we'll go this far tonight. The reason your spiritual business is my business and mine is yours, and the reason you and I need to get involved in some relationships where we say to people, hey, my life's an open book, and I have some things I need you to hold me accountable about, and I'm asking you to stick your nose in my spiritual business, the reason is because Jesus believed and Jesus taught that you and I are accountable to each other, even for things as bad as our specific sins.

Your sin is my business, and my sin is your business. And Jesus said, you need to be accountable for one another, even in terms of your sin. So, that's one reason that you need to develop these kind of accountability relationships.

There's a second reason. I want you to turn over to 1 Corinthians. We're going to hit these quick.

1 Corinthians 12. The second reason is this. Our relationship to the body of Christ necessitates accountability.

Our relationship to the body of Christ necessitates accountability. 1 Corinthians chapter 12. 1 Corinthians chapter 12.

In fact, we'll begin with verse 12. 1 Corinthians chapter 12. The second reason.

Number one, Jesus commanded it. Number two, that our relationship to the body of Christ necessitates accountability. Look at verse 12 of chapter 12.

For even as the body is one, and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. Now, you know, you read sentences like that, and you think, you know, the Bible has to be inspired, because if they were trying to make up something to sound plausible, they would have fixed that sentence, wouldn't they? I mean, this kind of goes round and round. We'll explain it.

Verse 13. For by one spirit, we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one spirit. For the body, that's us, is not one member, but many.

Now, look at this. He gives an illustration. If the foot should say.

Now, if your foot said anything, it'd be pretty amazing, wouldn't it? Paul gives us an illustration that's a little bit silly. This is a little bit silly. Look what he says.

If the foot should say, because I'm not a hand, I'm not a part of the body, it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. Now, look up here. Let me explain what all this means to the best of my ability.

The point is this. The one other reason that we have to be accountable to one another is because the relationship of the body of Christ necessitates it. This is what Paul says.

That all of us, and you've heard this before, all of us are parts of one body. And just as the physical body has many members, so the spiritual body has many members. And then he gives this kind of silly illustration.

He said, what if one day your foot said, hey, I'm not a part of this body anymore. Would your foot be any less a part of the body? The answer is no. So when you say to me, or if I say to you, hey, you mind your own spiritual business, because this is between me and God, am I any less accountable to you? Are you any less accountable to me? If I'm walking along somewhere, and I step on a nail, and a nail goes through my foot, my foot doesn't say, hey body, you just go about your own thing, and I'll take care of the nail.

And I'm dragging my foot around going, okay, foot, you take care of the nail. It's none of my business. I don't want to get involved.

That's between you and the nail. That's not how we act at all. But that's just as silly, that is just as silly, as to see your brother or your sister in Christ go off the deep end and stand back and say, well, they'll just have to deal.

That's between them and God. No, what happens? I step on a nail. As soon as I step on a nail, left leg picks up foot.

Hand reaches out to steady myself. Right, head, neck begins to turn head. Mouth begins calling for help.

Right leg takes all the weight and says, I got it from here, and begins to carry my body over. What happens? When something happens to my foot, listen, every single part of me, all of me goes into action to take care of this foot. Why? Because the rest of me is responsible for the foot.

And in a very simple way, and in almost a silly way, Paul says this, hey, there are no spiritual lone rangers. That all of us, by the very fact that we're related to each other in Christ, we are by definition accountable to one another. And if my foot says I'm not a part of the body, it can say that all at once, but what the scripture says is it's still part of the body.

And I can be, you know, the spiritual lone ranger all I want, thinking, you know, me and God are a majority, and I don't need anybody else. And you know, you know, I've been to seminary, you know, I'm deep, and you know, don't get involved in my spiritual life. And God just shakes his head and said, you are no less accountable to that group of people than your foot is to your body, if your foot says I'm not a part of the body.

It's the same thing. And if you're here tonight, see this, for men, you know what this does, men, and we'll talk about this in a minute, kind of strikes at our pride. You know, I, you know, I just, I don't want anybody prying into my life.

Well, I've got some bad news. If you're here tonight, and you're a Christian, I'm already a part of your life. And the brothers and sisters in Christ around you tonight, we are already, by definition, a part of your life.

You are in God's eyes accountable to me, and I am in God's eyes accountable to you. And what I am trying to encourage us to do tonight, instead of, I mean, it gets messy if you try to be accountable to a whole bunch of people, but to take these illustrations, and to take this simple principle, and to begin to say, God, please bring into my life that group of people, or that individual, to whom I can choose to be accountable, because Jesus commanded it, and the very fact that I'm related to the body of Christ

necessitates it anyway. Why do you and I need to be accountable? Jesus said to be accountable.

Number two, that to the body of Christ necessitates it. And then there's a third reason, and I don't have any scriptures for this, but I just want you to think about it. Common sense argues for accountability.

Common sense argues for accountability. Let's face it, we do better when somebody's checking up on us, don't we? We just do better. Imagine a coach who sat in his office and said, team, today I want you to go out on the field, and I made a list of the drills I want you to do, and I'll be in my office if you need anything.

And the team would walk out of the field and look at each other like, he's kidding. If the coach isn't out there watching, the team just doesn't practice very hard. When I was in Dallas, I used to run around a lake called White Rock Lake, and there was a great trail through all these woods, and went all the way around the lake.

It was nine miles around. I never made it around, but there was nine miles of track around, and most of this track was kind of off to itself down in some woods around the lake. But every once in a while, the track would empty out onto a parking lot, and there would be about 80 yards of parking lot, and then at the other end of the parking lot, you pick up the trail again and go back in the woods.

And I noticed something about the way I ran. When my friend Larry and I ran, and we were in the woods, we just kind of, you know, did the running thing, you know, just kind of normal. But when we got to the parking lot, where there were all these cars parked, and all these guys out laying out in the sun, all these girls laying out in the sun, you know, it looked like Rocky on the beach, you know.

It's, you know, all of a sudden, man, you know, we were running like no problem, you know. We're eighth or ninth mile. I mean, no big deal.

As soon as we got in the woods, we slowed back down. It wasn't even conscious. We just kind of, why? Because you and I, it's human nature, we do better when somebody's watching.

And I want you to know something. You'll do better in your spiritual life when somebody's checking up on you. And you rob yourself of one of the greatest spiritual helps if you have this attitude that, you know, it's none of my business, it's me and God, and I don't need anybody.

I can pray my way out of this. No, you can't. And the thing is, you weren't even meant to.

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, theoretically, I work out. I say theoretically, because although most Monday, Wednesdays, and Fridays, I meet my partner early in the morning before the day begins, I've noticed another trend in my life. That is this.

If Matt calls me and says, Andy, I can't be there Monday, guess who else doesn't show up on Monday? Me. But if I know he's going to be there, then I show up. I hate, I hate to get up early, and I hate to work out.

But if Matt's going to be there, I show up. And if I'm going to be there, he shows up. But both of us laugh, because if we know the other one's not going to be there, we don't go.

You know why? Because we do better when somebody's holding us accountable in every area of life. And I want you to know something. As much as I hate working out, and as much as I hate getting up, you know something? It still does me good.

I hate every minute of it, and it still does me good. And I want you to know something. If in your spiritual life, you read your Bible just because somebody's going to ask you, did you read your Bible? It'll still do you some good.

And if the only reason you pray is because somebody's asking you, did you pray? It'll still do you some good. And if you begin to allow somebody to hold you accountable in your spiritual disciplines, and the only reason you do it is because somebody's going to ask you, did you memorize your verse, or whatever? I want you to know something. It will still do you good, just like working out does me good, even though I hate every minute of it.

You need to be accountable, because we just do better when somebody's watching, when somebody's checking on us. Another reason it makes sense to be accountable, common sense, is this. That we all have blind spots we'll never know about, unless somebody has permission to tell us.

Now, I want you to know something. Some of you out, let me confess first, I can be so incredibly insensitive. I mean, I can say things that I think are funny, and everybody else is looking behind my back like, I can't believe you said that.

And I mean, for years of my life, I just shredded people's feelings and never had any idea. And finally, it came out in a conversation, and this guy was laughing about it. I said, I'm that way? He said, yeah, but everybody just knows you're that way.

Nobody told me. Everybody just laughed behind my back. Because, you know why? I'd never gone to anybody and said, hey, you know, if you see me hurt somebody's feelings, would you tell me? I have two people now.

Sandra's one, and there's another person in our youth ministry. And I told them, look, when you see me say something to somebody, and I turn around and walk off, and they look like they're hurt, or they turn to somebody else, and they look like I've hurt their feelings, don't you wait five minutes. Find me, interrupt me, and say, Andy, you just hurt someone's feelings.

And I want you to know, I'm not going to be mad at you. I'm not going to hold it against you. I need you to hold me accountable, because I am so blind to that sometimes.

And I want you to know something. All of us in this room have blind spots. And some of us are so intimidating.

And some of us are so, you know, egotistical. And some of us, our personalities are such. Nobody is dare going to come up to you and share your blind spots with you for fear of being put down.

They're just not going to do it. They'll talk about you behind your back. They'll kid about you.

They'll kind of chalk you off as, you know, whatever they think you are. But they are not going to come to you, and you are the loser. Unless you choose a handful of people and say, hey, I know I have a tendency to be this way.

I want you, I want to work on it, and I'm giving you permission. I will not hold it against you. I'm giving you permission to confront me.

And pick out the ways they want, you want them to confront you and say, hey, I want to know. It just makes sense that we allow ourselves to be accountable to other people. Jesus commanded it.

Body of Christ insensitates it. It just makes common sense. Now I want to share with you how this really came to be a part of my life.

And I started an accountability relationship with a guy in Dallas, but it was until I got to Atlanta that the, I guess, the weight of this principle really hit me. I was driving back from a trip. I was coming up 75.

I remember exactly where I was. I was in 75, and the farmers market was just a little bit ahead of me, up on my right. And I was listening to the sermon, Jimmy Swaggart's Confession Sermon, which I'm sure some of you heard.

And he said something I will never forget as long as I live. He said this. He talked about his problem and his struggle in that area since he was 10 years old.

And then he said this, I fasted and I prayed and I begged God day after day, year after year, to deliver me from this. He said, and now I realize if I turned to my brothers and sisters in Christ for help, I would have been delivered. That same night, I couldn't get away from that.

That same night, 11 o'clock, I called one of my accountability partners, woke him up. I said, look, we got to get together. He said, now? I said, right now.

I said, this is serious. I said, I want to tell you, I want to tell you that, I said, I want to tell you something nobody else knows about me. He got up, we met at the O.K. Cafe, and I looked at him across the table.

I said, I want to tell you my greatest temptation, because I realize today, not directly related to anything he said, but the principle, I realize today that there's something in my life that's so small and seems so insignificant, and it doesn't even have victory in my life. The Lord gives me victory, but I realize there's something in my life nobody knows about. And listen, and I said, I would rather you who loves me know, even though it's embarrassing, I would rather you who loves me know and hold me accountable, than run the risk of someday this little thing becoming a big thing and embarrassing me in front of a whole lot of people who don't know me, and a whole lot of people who don't love me, and a whole lot of people who would love to see me go down.

And I shared with him my dark side, and everybody has a dark side, and he said, you know what, I have the same problem. And there began another great and wonderful accountability relationship. I want you to know something, everybody in this room, there's something that if it grows, if it goes unchecked, unbridled, it can destroy your marriage.

It can destroy your most valuable relationships. It can destroy your business. And if you for a second believe that somehow you've got it under control, I want you to know something tonight, God does not expect you to handle it alone.

God never anywhere said it's just me and you buddy. He said, I want you to be accountable to the body of Christ, that your problem, and your struggle, and your temptation, and your difficulty, and the thing that just wears at you is not just your problem, it's the entire body's problem. Find some people you can trust, and share with them that one thing, and allow it to stay small.

You know how this works out in your life? And allow me just to be extremely personal for a minute. There's men in this room, and there's a woman who's not physically a part of your life yet, but is emotionally a part of your life, who's not your wife. And nobody knows but you.

And you desperately, men, need to find a man you can trust, and tell him exactly what you're going through, and tell him her name. And say to him, if you even see me looking like I'm thinking about, thinking about, thinking about making a move toward in this relationship, you have my permission to do whatever it takes to stop me. Men, you need a friend that at lunchtime, when you want to ask that girl to lunch so bad, and you've got a thousand reasons why you owe her all this stuff, and she's been a great secretary, she's a great help, and it doesn't matter, nobody cares, nobody'll know, and all that stuff's running through your mind, and in your heart, you know you have no business going out to lunch with her alone.

You need to have a friend you can call and say, it's happening, pick me up. And he'll say, I'll be there, pick you up, take you to lunch, and get you out of that. You need that.

And if somehow you think, no, you know, me and God, you know, I'll quote a few verses, and just one. Listen, that is not how God expects you to handle temptation. You're not the Lone Ranger.

None of it. We are part of a body, and we desperately need each other. As I talk to students, and I listen to, I mean, the stories are the same, the characters just change about divorce, and family splitting up, and parents running off.

It's the same thing, and I believe with all my heart, men, if you and I would get over our big fat pride, and that's basically what it is, and get involved with some men that we could trust, that we could pour out our heart, there would be far fewer families splitting up. But we live in a society where, men, we don't want to be accountable to anybody, for anything, other than things we just have to be. And as a result, we begin drifting, listen, long before anybody ever knows, because nobody's close.

And then all of a sudden, we do something, and it's like, what happened to him? I don't know, he's the finest guy, he's at church every Sunday, and all of a sudden, something happened. No, all of a sudden, nothing happened. It began, but it was so personal, and you chose to keep it private, and it was a mistake.

It's God's will for you to be accountable to your brothers and sisters in Christ, those personal areas. Ladies, some of you need accountability in terms of your gossip. You've tried, and you laugh, and you kind of poke, and gossip, and gossip, but it's a sin.

It's on the list with the worst stuff in the Bible. You know what some of you ladies need? You need a partner to say, hey, look, I have a terrible time with gossip. When we're in a conversation, and I start to gossip, just hang up on me, or just, you know, go, ah, or just let me know.

There I go again, because it's a blind spot. I mean, as soon as we start to, I love to talk about other people, and this is a sin, and it's a habit. Will you help me get over this habit I have of gossiping? If you see me in a conversation talking about somebody, as soon as that conversation's over, you have my permission to come to me and say, hey, Betty, you did it again.

Did you see what you're doing? You have my permission to stick your nose in my spiritual business to help me deal with this situation. There's basically three reasons why you and I won't get in these kind of relationships. Number one, you've been burned.

You've already tried this. You said, well, I had a friend once, and I opened my life to them, and I told them my most, my biggest secrets, and they went and told a bunch of people, and then I was embarrassed, and so I just gave up on it. Well, I want you to know something.

One time I went to a lady, she cut my hair, and she did a terrible job, but I didn't quit getting haircuts. I just found somebody else to cut my hair, and some of you had people mess up your taxes, but you didn't quit doing your taxes. You found somebody else to do your taxes, and if you've had a bad experience, and if you've been in a relationship where somebody betrayed your trust, don't let that cause you to abandon this principle.

You desperately need to be in that kind of accountability relationship. There's another reason you wouldn't do this. Number, you're just not convinced it's necessary.

You just think, well, you know, that's neat, Andy, and I guess you're, you know, have problems, and that's good you have people to help you with your problems, but, you know, I don't have any problems in my life. I don't see any sin encroaching, and, you know, my spiritual life is fine, and I don't need anybody sticking their nose in it. Well, I want you to know tonight that obviously this sermon didn't do you any good, and one day, listen, one day, what you think is a secret now, which isn't, because the people that are closest to you already know the things that you would probably share with them anyway, you'll sit down with them and say, let me share something about you, about myself, that no one else knows, and you'll tell them, they'll go, oh, we already knew that.

Everybody knows that about you. It's true, because what we think is so secret, listen, sin is rarely private. Oh, we think it is, but it shows, and if it shows a little bit now, it'll show a great deal later on, and you've got to decide, is it worth, is it worth risking this, this private part of me for the sake of something greater down the road? Is it worth sharing with people who love me now in order to keep myself and my family from being embarrassed in front of people who don't love me later on? Then the other reason, and we've already said this, the main reason that we don't get involved in these kind of relationships is just pride.

You know, we, you would say, I'm just not an open person. That may be true, but that's still not reason enough to apply this principle. Well, I just, I just, you know, I just don't like to talk about those kind of things.

That may be true, but that's still not good enough reason. Those are good observations, but they're not good enough reasons to ignore this incredibly, incredibly important principle. God does not expect us to struggle alone.

There is no temptation taken anybody in this room, except it is common to man. That means there's nobody in here who could stand up tonight and say, and I got one I bet you guys end up with, and we all go, whoo, hadn't heard that one. That's a new one.

There's no new ones. It's all the same thing. We're all struggling with the same thing, and just because the foot says I'm not a part of the foot is irrelevant, and just because you say I'm not accountable is irrelevant.

You are accountable, and if you could only understand and take the risk and take the step of faith to begin praying a simple prayer, Lord Jesus, please begin bringing into my life people to whom I can be accountable. I want you to know it will change your whole Christian life. You're not the Lone Ranger.

You're not even Superman. Jesus was the only Superman, and the rest of us are just kind of struggling doing the best we can, and we desperately need each other, and that's not a sign of weakness. That's just how it is.

I can't walk on water. You can't walk on water. That's no fault.

That's just, we just can't do that, and in the same way, we were not expected to survive single-handedly through all the stuff in this world, and Jesus said, I want you to hold each other accountable. Paul said that's the way the whole body is set up, and common sense just tells us, hey, you do better when somebody's watching and somebody's checking up on you. There's some of you in relationships tonight, single or college students, some of our high school students, and you know you need to get out of the relationship, and you've broken up, and you keep getting back together, and you've broken up, and you keep getting back together, and you think, I'll never get out of this relationship.

Let me tell you how you do it. Some of our students have done this in the youth department. They call a best friend.

They say, hey, this relationship is not of the Lord, and I do not have enough self-control. You have my permission to call me every weekend and ask me what I'm doing for the weekend, and I want you, if I'm going down under the pressure, please come over and pick me up and take me somewhere so that I don't have to deal with this anymore. That's the kind of accountability you and I need in terms of our relationships and in terms of the things that you're struggling with.

Now, let me ask you, and we're finished. Do you have that type of relationship with anybody? You say, well, my wife, and I don't know. Husbands and wives are accountable to each other in some areas, but you need someone, and please understand, you need someone outside your marriage.

Men, men, you need men. Women, you need women that you can pour out your heart to, that you, people you can trust, people that you respect their opinions spiritually, but most importantly of all, people who you open your life as a book and say, in this particular area, or in these particular areas, or maybe you trust them so much you want to say, hey, in any area, you have my permission to stick your nose in my business, because I have weaknesses. I have things I struggle with, things that nobody knows about.

If you could sit in on what our counselors listen to every week, every one of them would say, if they're here tonight, that majority of the time, or at least a lot of time, the people they talk to say, I want to tell you something that nobody knows about. I hope there's nothing in your life that nobody knows about. God does not expect you to carry the weight of that burden.

God does not expect you to carry the weight of that temptation alone, and I want to challenge you tonight as we close to begin praying a simple prayer. Lord Jesus, I understand that I am accountable to the body of Christ, and Lord Jesus, will you begin bringing people into my life that I can allow to hold me accountable, and these few areas are generally. And if you'll do that, number one, you'll be obedient, and number two, you'll be blessed, and number three, you'll feel like a load is just lifted off your shoulders as you begin to function the way you were intended to function in the body of Christ.

Who are you accountable to? And are you willing, if not accountable to anyone, are you willing to begin moving into those relationships? Would you bow your head quietly, nobody looking around? I'm gonna do something a little bit different tonight. You just bow your head and close your eyes. I'm not trying to

manipulate anybody.

We don't do that here, but we're gonna begin our accountability right now. And in just a minute, don't do this yet, in just a minute, I'm gonna ask those of you that are saying to this body, hey, I believe I need to be accountable, and number two, I'm gonna begin praying that God will move me in to some accountability relationships. If you're willing to say that and believe that, in a minute I'm gonna ask you to stand.

And the reason I'm asking you to stand is because this is what accountability is. It's raising your hand publicly and saying, I'm in. Count me in.

I'm weak and I need it. And I feel led tonight to ask some of you to begin your first step of accountability by demonstrating it by publicly standing. Lord Jesus, thank you for this principle.

And Lord, I just thank you personally that you didn't expect Andy Stanley to carry around his dark side by himself without sharing it with anybody. Thank you that I don't have to keep that a secret. Thank you for the people you've brought into my life.

And Lord, thank you for not waiting till I was 40 or 50 to teach me this principle, because I don't think I would have made it that long. And Lord, I know there's many women here tonight who are struggling and they think, well, that sounds good and that sounds right, but I just don't know. Would you give them the courage to see that this isn't something you're lording over them.

This is because you love them. This is one of the positive things about being in the body of Christ. This is the one of the positive things about being a Christian.

And Lord Jesus, I pray that as a result of tonight, not what I've said, but what these people are about to commit themselves to, that you would begin developing in our whole congregation a brand new sense of accountability to one another. That Father, when homes split up, that those of us on staff would have the courage to rebuke and to approach people. That Father, no one in this congregation would have to live with the burden of a past or of sin or of temptations by themselves, but that we would minister to each other.

And Lord, I know that's your will. We all believe that's your will. Please take tonight and begin moving us in that direction.

If you're here tonight and you're willing to say, I need accountability. I believe that's what God wants me to do. And I'm willing to begin praying tonight that God would move me in to those kinds of relationships.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, would you just stand where you are? Dear Heavenly Father, I pray right now for these groups specifically and for myself and for those others, that Lord Jesus, you will honor their faithfulness to you tonight. And that in the next week or the next month that you will bring into their life the man or the woman or the small group that they are asking you for tonight to hold them accountable. Father, we're saying tonight that we're willing.

And Father, we're asking that you would be faithful to this request and move us into relationships with those significant key people. And we're trusting you to do this. In Jesus' name.

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