



Christ's Covenant Church Publication Series

ON STARTING A MEN'S ACCOUNTABILITY GROUP

by Pastor Larry E. McCall

I look forward to 6:00 a.m. on Fridays. That's right. Not 6:00 *p.m.* on Fridays, heading home after a long week (although that's great, too!), but 6:00 *a.m.*! You see, that's when I get together with four other men from our church for our weekly accountability group. For years four of my most trusted friends and I have met at a local restaurant for breakfast on Friday mornings in order to encourage one another in our daily lives as Christian men.

Now that most of us have entered the enjoyable realm of being grandfathers, we teasingly refer to ourselves as the "Old Men for Christ" group. If you were to visit our customary table in the corner of the restaurant, you would find oatmeal, omelets, open Bibles—and oceans of coffee!

Over the years this band of brothers has shaped and sharpened my life as a Christian man. Though we sometimes call ourselves an accountability group, I think of us more in terms of an encouragement group. We help each other stay on the path that leads to life (Matthew 7:14). We lovingly but firmly nudge a brother who seems to be veering off toward unbelief or disobedience. We seek to live out the mandate of Hebrews 3:12–13, "See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness."

Are you in a group like this? Over time, as you commit to walking the Christian life with a team of brothers, you can experience such blessings as these:

- *Insightful feedback.* Brothers who know you well can help you objectively gauge how you are doing spiritually. "The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice" (Proverbs 12:15).
- *Accountability.* Brothers who know you well can hold you accountable, helping you keep your commitments to the Lord, to your wife, and to your local body of believers. "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17).
- *Encouragement.* Brothers who know you well can encourage you to "keep on keeping on" as you face difficult times at home, at work, in the church and in the community. "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!" (Ecclesiastes 4:9–10).
- *Prayer support.* Brothers who know you well can talk to the Lord about your struggles with temptation and your confession of sin. "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (James 5:16).

If you are in an accountability group like this, commit yourself to sticking with it. It can be wonderful blessing in your Christian walk in general and your marriage in particular. If you're *not* in an accountability group, here are some ideas for organizing one:

Getting Started

First, ask the Lord to direct you to the men with whom He may want to become a band of brothers. Then, begin looking for Christian men who seem to share your desire to grow in your daily walk with Christ. Look for men whom you know to be committed to Christ, to His Word, to the church and to living humble and honest lives before their family and friends.¹

Ask these men to get together for an exploratory meeting. Set a time and place that works for most or all of the men you are inviting—even if it's six a.m.! At that initial meeting explain your desire for accountability in your own life and

ask others to share their interest as well. Choose a good time and place to meet and a basic format. Agree on rules for honesty, accountability, and confidentiality.

You may agree to read an appropriate book together (like this one) beforehand, then discuss it when you get together. However, accountability groups don't have to be complicated or require a lot of preparation.

Steve Farrar writes, "The purpose is simply to get together and check in with each other. There is really no agenda other than being honest. The discussion should center around each man giving a report on his spiritual disciplines, his job, his family, and anything else the other men should know about. If you had a rough time with temptation, you should clue them in. If you are facing a personal crisis at home or on the job, you should let them in on it and seek their counsel and prayers."²

When your group begins to meet regularly, Lord willing, you will notice an increasing openness and vulnerability with one another, a confident sharing of joys and struggles. It will become easier to ask personal questions and answer them honestly. You can share Scripture with one another and pray for one another.

There is so much value in walking this journey of faith with committed brothers in Christ—even if it means getting up for a 6:00 a.m. meeting each week!

The writer of Hebrews challenges us, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but *let us encourage one another*—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25, emphasis added).

Notes

1. Some churches that have a strong small-group ministry have benefited from having their groups meet on alternating weeks as "mixed" groups (men and women together) and then separate men's and women's groups. For example, a month's worth of small-group meetings might be laid out so that men and women meet together on weeks 1 and 3. Only the women meet on week 2 and only the men meet on week 4. This plan gives both women and men some gender-specific accountability each month as well as allowing husbands and wives to have the same group of friends to whom they can relate couple-to-couple.

2. Steve Farrar, *Point Man* (Sisters, Ore.: Multnomah, 2003), 119.

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