

*“Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire;  
he breaks out against all sound judgement.”*

*~ Proverbs 18:1*



**NEWS**  
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## Accountability: Not an Option

By Bob Ragan

**A**ccountability is a topic that receives much discussion but I believe is misunderstood by many. For those who struggle with sexual and relational sin and brokenness, accountability is a necessity, not an option. Throughout the Scriptures there are many examples of accountability. The Lord had His prophets hold His people accountable. There are several New Testament examples where Paul and the apostles held each other answerable for their actions.

Accountability, like quiet time, is a discipline. It requires a choice of the will to enter into such a relationship with others. Discipline is required because we must choose to make this time a priority rather than an occasional event. It is a commitment we make to one another that this is going to be a fundamental part of our Christian walks, our sanctification process.

Some confuse confession with accountability. Although confession is a necessary part of accountability, it is by no means its equivalent. I may confess my sins and repent, but unless I give permission for others to also ask me about the circumstances that led to my sinful choices, it remains only confession. It also must be stated that there must be a willingness to share with others what we have confessed in private with God. We need to allow our brothers and sisters to enter into those places in which we experience our weaknesses and deep vulnerabilities.

Accountability also is not simply having understanding of another's struggle or being able to have empathy for them. If I am not willing to make the difficult choices to overcome similar sin in my own life, how will I truly be able to call others to go where I will not (I Corinthians 9:27)? Such a situation can easily turn into legalistic transference. I impose the "law" onto another in an

attempt to avoid having to face my own sin. It may also turn into "sloppy agape" (love without boundaries) where I enable others to remain stuck because I will not speak the words which I also must adhere to in my life.

In the remainder of this article, I will offer some helpful guidance as to how to implement healthy and effective accountability relationships in your life.

### Who do I approach?

Prayerfully seek the Lord to guide you in your search for an accountability partner. Perhaps your pastor or a church elder can assist you in your search, but I believe it is important not to expect your pastor to be that person for you. Here's why: the ideal accountability partner is one who is *readily* available to you. Due to the demands on church leadership, many pastors are simply unavailable for this purpose. However, they may be aware of others who are searching or may know of a group you may join.

Those whom you would approach to be an accountability partner must have some capacity to demonstrate unconditional love and acceptance.

Ideally there is a mutual vulnerability as peers between accountability partners. Without this, a situation can arise which may result in defensiveness or posturing. Our role is not to try to fix or give advice (unless requested) but to the best of our ability to be non-judging and good listeners!

Allow the Lord to choose those who will come along side of you. He is the one who knows us best and those who would be ideal. Our hearts never have totally pure motives and we may knowingly or unknowingly ask someone who may not have the capacity to truly hold us

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accountable. Since the Lord knows us completely, it is best to trust in Him to connect us with those whom He knows will be able to function in this capacity. One of the first steps in establishing accountability is the laying down of my control issues!

**Willingness to be real**

The bedrock of accountability is my willingness to commit to honesty, transparency, vulnerability, and ultimately to the Lordship of Jesus in all areas of my life. In a truly committed accountability relationship, I am willing to hold nothing back. I am willing to acknowledge my shame or self-hatred and not let these feelings limit the depth of my transparency. I willingly take off my masks no matter what they may be: perfectionism, religiosity, self-protection, victimhood, etc.

It is I who make the choice to be accountable. I don't require another to force me to be transparent. Eventually I will take responsibility as an adult son or daughter to share and not wait for another to ask me that pivotal question. We may not be able to do this at first but begin by requesting to be asked key questions that you know need to be asked. Ultimately however, we each must mature to a place where we willingly bring forth the necessary information *before* someone asks. We choose to humble ourselves and in so doing will be lifted up.

**Getting started**

I highly recommend that the goal and definition of accountability be understood by everyone involved. Each accountability partner initially should share what his or her expectations and hopes are. This will help to minimize confusion or any false perceptions that could otherwise arise later.

Guiding principles need to be initially established as well. Each accountability partner needs to be committed to the group. This includes making attendance a priority, keeping shared information confidential, praying for each member daily, and following through on any promises. Discuss any limitations such as where (work/home), when (time), and how (phone/e-mail) each accountability partner can be contacted. Pick a location and time to meet that is best suited to everyone's schedule.

**Accountability Items**

The specific areas of accountability will vary as needed. Each accountability partner needs to share what his or

her *specific* areas of weakness are. Be open about what questions you need to be asked or what the situations are in which you find yourself most vulnerable to temptation. Initially these questions can be written down so they are available for each meeting. A general list can be made up as well which is applicable for all. Eventually this list may not be needed.

Items covered during a meeting need to go beyond just areas of weakness. I would also include asking each other about having quiet times, spending time in God's Word, fulfilling family obligations, having other ongoing healthy relationships, making time to have fun, etc. Also, don't focus just on behaviors but ask how God expressed His Presence in your life during this past week. Give testimony of how God manifested His gifts/blessings.

After an accountability partner has shared any particularly intimate or difficult information, be sensitive to how he or she may experience subsequent feelings of shame. Express gratitude for the courage it took to be that revealing or transparent. Follow up contact later may be especially helpful (even welcomed) as spiritual warfare may occur which could lead to isolation or turning inward to self-hatred.

Prayer is a crucial aspect of accountability groups. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading when difficult information has just been shared. Instead of moving on, stop for a moment and pray. Each time you meet always save *adequate* time to pray for each other! Don't make prayer a quick superficial closing but one during which God can minister to each individual.

**Ultimate Goal**

The true goal of an accountability group is found in I Thessalonians 5:11: "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing." The bottom line goal is that we can encourage each other to become the men or women God created us to be. We offer support in times of struggle and affirm that which expresses God's true nature within us. ■

**Bob Ragan** is the full time director of Regeneration of Northern Virginia. He is a past chairman of Exodus International and has been an invited speaker having ministered across the United States and in Asia, South America, and Europe.

## Avoiding Accountability Pitfalls

By Josh Glaser

We enter accountability groups hoping they'll help us put an end to sinful habits and bring about godly ones. But there are pitfalls that make accountability groups ineffective. Bob Ragan has touched on many of these in the main article; we want to offer a few more pitfalls to avoid, as well as alternatives to bring about more effective accountability.

**Pitfall 1: Dishonest Honesty** – Sharing about a sin but keeping part of it to yourself, or sharing about some sins but never revealing others. This gives the appearance of having confessed and come clean, but in truth, we're still allying ourselves with the sin we're trying to stop.

**Alternative: Brutal Honesty** – Speak the whole truth, remembering that keeping silent can be a form of deception. If you're too ashamed to share the whole truth, then tell your accountability partners that. They can pray for, encourage, and wait for you until you are ready (Ephesians 4:5).

**Pitfall 2: Sloppy Timing** – Not clearly defining a place, date and time to meet regularly for accountability. This may seem trite, but I've seen it too many times; where there is ambiguity or laxity in scheduling, accountability will slip away—especially when we're tempted or struggling with shame.

**Alternative: Definitive Scheduling** – Be clear with one another when and where you will meet and how regularly. Also clarify what to do if missing a meeting is unavoidable (i.e. call ahead of time, participate via speakerphone, etc.) (Hebrews 10:23 – 25).

**Pitfall 3: Titillating Confession** – Using graphic or explicit language when talking about sin. Using word pictures, street names, web addresses, physical descriptions of body parts or actions, etc. is not helpful.

**Alternative: Clear Confession** – Speaking truthfully and precisely while avoiding stumbling blocks for another or for yourself (Colossians 3:9, 10; Galatians 6:1 –5).

**Pitfall 4: Answer-Man Responding** – Giving each other pat answers, offering clichés or quick advice. Often, we are tempted to offer advice or answers not out of love but because we are uncomfortable with another person's pain.

**Alternative: Earned-Right Responding** – Trust takes time to develop. When someone is confessing, listen, really listen. As your group begins, it may be enough to thank one another for being honest. As trust is established, then begin to ask each other questions, offer reflective feedback, and on occasion challenge one another where necessary (Proverbs 12:18, Proverbs 20:5).

**Pitfall 5: Group Relativism** – When the group adjusts moral standards based on how the different accountability partners are doing (i.e. excusing sin because it's summer time and everyone is struggling with lust).

**Alternative: Group Strength** – The group helps each other hold to a scriptural standard of sexual morality no matter how difficult it may seem (Ecclesiastes 4:10).

**Pitfall 6: Legalistic Thinking** – When we believe, even subtly, that we can earn more of God's love and attention by doing well, and that we can lose God's love and attention by doing poorly.

**Alternative: Christ's Righteousness** – When members of the group seek to rely on the righteousness of Christ rather than their own to warrant God's love and help, whether doing well or doing poorly (Philippians 3:8, 9; Galatians 2:21).

**Pitfall 7: Shameful Avoidance** – Staying away from your accountability partners or from God when you sin or fail.

**Alternative: Isolation Avoidance** – At all costs, practice moving *toward* God and others rather than *away* from them when you fall again to sin. Receiving God's grace and love for you from your accountability partners, however well or poorly you are doing in this moment, is a key to freedom from sexual sin (Romans 2:4; 5:20; Hebrews 4:15, 16).

At its core, accountability is about relationships—real people with real people. This is in stark contrast to the illusory world of sexual sin. The love, grace, and truth available in godly accountability relationships represents Christ to us—and He is how true and lasting change happens. ■

### Please Pray With Us . . .

**Thanksgiving** – Both of our offices have now completed the 2005 – 2006 Living Waters programs. We thank God for His faithfulness to the men and women who participated. We also thank God for the men and women who helped lead these groups, giving their time and energy in service to the Lord who heals.

**Petitions** – Please pray for those who completed Living Waters, that the seeds planted there would bear much fruit in their lives. Also please pray that they would become or continue to be connected to local churches where they can be living out their healing and growth. Lastly, please pray for our summer programs: New Beginnings, Wives Group, Men's Group, SALT, and Woman's Group (pending).

For more information or in-depth monthly prayer requests,  
E-mail [josh@RegenerationMinistries.org](mailto:josh@RegenerationMinistries.org).

## MINISTRY NEWS

### EXODUS FREEDOM CONFERENCE

There is still time to register for the annual **Exodus Freedom Conference**, coming June 27<sup>th</sup> – July 2<sup>nd</sup> to Marion, Indiana. This is truly a life-changing conference, and one unparalleled for those struggling with unwanted same-sex attractions, their loved ones, and others who care about this area of struggle. This year's conference, *Live Out Loud*, promises to be a time of great encouragement, refreshing, challenge, fellowship, and worship. In addition, **scholarships are available for both first-time conference attendees and for parents** of those who struggle homosexually. (*Scholarships are limited, so apply soon!*)

For more information or to register, visit  
[www.exodusfreedom.org](http://www.exodusfreedom.org)



### LIVING WATERS, FALL 2006

If you are a man or woman interested in taking the Living Waters program, Regeneration is beginning to accept applications for both its Northern Virginia and Baltimore 2006-2007 programs. Living Waters is a program for those with sexual and/or relational brokenness issues such as homosexuality, sexual addictions, sexual abuse, codependency, and others.

**Please contact us for more information or to apply.**

**Northern VA / DC Metro:** 703-591-4673

E-mail: [RegenNova@RegenerationMinistries.org](mailto:RegenNova@RegenerationMinistries.org)

**Baltimore Area:** 410-661-0284

E-mail: [RegenBalto@RegenerationMinistries.org](mailto:RegenBalto@RegenerationMinistries.org)

**These programs fill up quickly, so don't delay!**

## FINANCIAL NEWS

As families travel with elevated gas prices this summer, we expect many will feel the financial pinch even more than usual during this season when giving typically drops in ministries and churches around the country. Simultaneously and for obvious reasons, the summer can also be a time of increased temptation for many of the men and women we serve.

Our Father is watching out for these, His children, so we are confident He will supply all we need to do the work He's called us to do. All we ask of you is this: Would you ask Him whether or not He'd like to partner with you in meeting this need? If He says no, that is really fine with us! If He says yes, we'd love to have you alongside us through this exciting summer! Thanks for asking!

## PARENTS SUPPORT

If you are a parent living in the Baltimore area and seeking a supportive environment in dealing with a gay son or daughter—an environment that does not condone homosexuality—please contact Regeneration for more information at [RegenBalto@RegenerationMinistries.org](mailto:RegenBalto@RegenerationMinistries.org) or 410-661-0284.

## Regeneration Is...

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### Northern Virginia Office

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### Group Meetings

#### Baltimore, MD

- Living Waters
- New Beginnings (Sexual Addiction Group)
- New Directions
- Growth Into Manhood
- Wives' Group

#### Northern, VA

- Living Waters
- Women's Group
- Wives' Group
- Men's Group
- Parents' Group
- s.a.l.t. (Sexual Addiction Group)

#### Washington, D.C.

- Men's Drop-In Group