

**General Topics :: Thoughts on church discipline or accountability****Thoughts on church discipline or accountability - posted by heraldndaw, on: 2011/1/27 1:31**

I just want to stir up some discussion on something that I haven't seen a lot of; biblical accountability.

I'll direct this especially for those in non-denominational settings, but those from mainline churches I would like to hear your opinions as well.

I come from predominantly a non-denominational church background and I have noticed that many non-denominational churches range from having relatively no structures for accountability, to having an abuse of pastoral authority.

When I speak of accountability I'm thinking on the micro and macro levels. How transparent are the lives of the pew sitters with each other in their struggles, and on the macro level who provides oversight of church board/pastor on personal and business matters?

Does your church have a good system of accountability?

What are the best forms or systems of accountability/ church discipline that you've seen?

Are you currently engaged in relationships with brothers or sisters who know your struggles internally and externally and are encouraging you in your walk?

**Re: Thoughts on church discipline or accountability - posted by rufnrust (), on: 2011/1/27 8:34**

Any discipline or accountability is only as strong as the relationships involved. No one can force this, and like it or not we are only as "accountable" as we are willing to be.

The way I see it, this should be something we seek for our personal benefit in our walk with God and each other. A local fellowship should encourage it on this level, and not try to force it or make a decree or a doctrine about it.

Ruf

**Re: Thoughts on church discipline or accountability, on: 2011/1/27 10:20**

Well, I'm back in the wilderness again. I'm used to that because of how many times I've moved since being saved.

What I'd like to address is the church that I left back where I lived just a little over a year ago now.

It was a denominational church, but I know that it was a rare one. I've checked out a church of the same denomination here, where I've moved to, and it is Nothing like the one I was in before.

It is oh so much a matter of who the pastor is and how their church 'government' (for a lack of better word) is set up.

In this church, the pastor was not "the boss". No ONE MAN was. They had a fairly large number of deacons and elders who were praying, humble, honest and Godly men. They would meet regularly to pray with the Pastor and Asst Pastors. They would do as the first church did - pray as leaders in the church until they truly came to decisions governed by The LORD and showed great love and compassion for all of the Lambs & unsaved everywhere - but once in about every 20 yrs or so - they'd have to remove Membership from a person - yet still extended themselves to the person. It would take gross immorality for them to do that. They'd even weep when having to do it.

When you have just one man governing - you have a monarchy that's not Scriptural. The "accountability" is to the leaders First!

Not only did these men know ALL of our struggles, because they all led sacrificial lives - but they also set out for any country that saw disasters - like Haiti, Puru, New Orleans, etc etc and helped even the unsaved of our town to food and paid electric bills for them - besides supporting 50 missionary families that were birthed From that Church, and other churches birthed from there, plus over-saw a not-for-profit nursing home that they built next door and had ministries for all the kids in town, etc. etc.. I can't even begin to name all that they are doing with not that many members. It's not a Mega Church. Just one that preaches Holiness unto the LORD in His Sincere Love.

Pastor drives an old car. So does his wife. Pastor or any of the men there will make time to counsel with anyone.

I truly fear a one-man-show from all that I've and others have been through with countless "fellowships".

And, to answer your other question, because these men have always been transparent & accountable to each other and to us - we are all transparent with each other during our fellowships together.

OK, yes, I think this was the closest to a NT church that I've seen in a long time except for two that I attended when I was first saved 35 years ago - and I thought I'd never find another like those, until finding this one spoken about above in 2006.

I miss them very much but I know that they're just a phone call away and just a heartbeat away - because we'll be spending eternity together after all. (Smiling & Thanking GOD)

**Re: - posted by heraldndaw, on: 2011/1/27 11:51**

I definitely agree that the depth of relationships corresponds to the quality of accountability, but the big question is how well does the leadership cultivate that sort of atmosphere. Most churches are not structured for developing deep relationships between members. When the emphasis is on the worship service many times true fellowship suffers. Even in small groups, transparency may deal with external situations but never internal issues. I also believe leadership should play a role in encouraging deeper levels by modeling it in their own lives.

**Re: Jesus is God - posted by heraldndaw, on: 2011/1/27 11:57**

Sounds like a great church. I'm just curious, did you leave because you moved to another area, and in your wilderness stage do you have brothers or sisters who may go to different churches, or from the past whom you continue to share with.

**Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2011/1/27 12:08**

I think a personal relationship based for accountability is the best. Yes, every church should have a council of elders who are responsible for shepherding the flock. But accountability must go beyond those who serve in that capacity.

Take a dear friend of mine, and an elder at the church I formerly attended. His name is Larry. I don't see Larry often, especially since we live a few miles apart and go to different churches. But in my world, Larry is still very much a spiritual father of faith to me. I still consider myself accountable to him, and likewise, he is accountable to me, because should either of us step out of line, the real relationship that we have invested with each other is at risk. And because I value and cherish our relationship, I am much more interested in reconciling an error I might be in because of that relationship.

For if I'm just simply being "held accountable" to a pope type figure who I have no real relationship with, then I am a lot more likely to shun and disregard whatever this person does to call me into account. I am more likely to run away and remain unchanged than to reform my behavior. For nothing is really at stake here, because neither of us really have skin in the game.

**Re: Thoughts on church discipline or accountability - posted by blandina, on: 2011/1/27 12:21**

You always are only accountable to God. In marriage, at work and in all relationships in the church and out you are only accountable to God.

You never put yourself in a position where man may have you do something against your will/conscience/Word of God.

The reason that there is so much spiritual abuse today is because of the false teaching of "accountability".

Saul was God's anointed, but David did not let himself get spiritually abused. He fled into the wilderness. The wilderness is a common place for those "Davids" that take their accountability to God, serious.

We are to mutually submit to one another. Brother to brother. That means Pastor to the least of the brethren, too. Not just the brethren to the Pastor.

We don't submit to man, we submit to God. He does not have us submit to men. He is our only leader and Great Shepherd.

If the least of the brethren is speaking by the Spirit of God, then the man on the platform should take careful notice of that. It is the Lord's voice and leading that we submit to, not man's voice and leading.

This will go a long way in preventing spiritual abuse and deception by a few, if all brethren are considered equal and if all brethren are not respecter of persons.

Many men say you are rebelling when you don't follow what they say, but in actuality, like David, you could very well be following the Lord. If it does not line up with God's Word and leading in your life, it is better to please God. Who we fear is whose approval we want.

Brothers and sisters should dwell together in harmony around the Lord and His precepts, not men.

If there is striving, then sometimes you have to leave.

After Abraham died, all the Philistines filled up the wells that he dug. Isaac dug another well and found water. The men of Gerar strove with him over the water. Isaac just moved on and dug another well. There was striving again and again Isaac moved on until there was no more striving.

There is plenty of water (water of life) to go around, but many times, man wants to put his fingerprints on the work of God. He wants to control the WATER. Like Saul. Davids cannot dwell in Saul's kingdom, so God has them leave, peacefully and quietly.

It is all about being accountable to God. I hope this helps some of you.

**Re: , on: 2011/1/27 12:37**

Hi heraldndaw. Yes, I moved last December.

I haven't met any born-again people here yet - at least none that I could feel free with because of some rather major doctrinal differences - and I'm not that fussy. The Church I spoke of before is a Reformed Theology Church and I'm what folks would call a freewill-pentecostal. I think that would say that I'm not fussy in a bad way - I think. They excepted me with my beliefs and I understand theirs and respect their views, because they are also more open than most.

About accountability - I firmly believe in that and always have. I lived in so many states and out of country but have maintained communication with those who knew me best for over 30 years, including this church that I'm still a member of, though living far from them now and the other States I've lived in. I believe in confession to Saints that we have maintained relationship with, as Bro Jimmy spoke about. My friends know me better than I know myself sometimes. That's Good! And it will never cease to amaze me how one will call just as I was thinking about them or asking The LORD if He would please have them call because I need counsel or a shoulder to lean on. Oh Blessed Body of Christ, Thank You Jesus!

Yes, this is true. So much to learn from each other. How His Body works together will always amaze me, when it's working properly that is - but I know He Does and will have a Body because of His prayer in John 17 - our other Blessed Hope. Glory to GOD!

Thank you for this thread. Bless you.

**Re: - posted by Joyful\_Heart, on: 2011/1/27 13:11**

Amen! We must be discerning also on whom we are transparent with. Not everyone is mature enough for this. If there is a religious spirit - there could be judging etc. I have had people say, your so transparent, but then I find myself being severely judged. I was totally transparent with a dear Saint here on SI. That person was a mature Christian and there was only love from them. Glory to God!

In my ladies group I have found being honest and transparent at times, when sharing, I am interrupted and preached to before I get to finish my sentence. If they had waited for me to finish they would have not had to preach to me! I most likely have done that to someone in the past too. God help us all.

So, I realize it is important to always go to the Lord first and be accountable to Him using His Word to keep us on the straight and narrow. So many times we go to people with our troubles before we ever go to the Lord. He will not judge us but He will convict and guide us if we confess our situation. He is faithful.

I am not saying don't go to man but I am saying be discerning on whom you go to and Dearest Lord remind me - us to take everything to You first. We can't do anything apart from You, our Lord and Savior, our Friend.

**Re: Thoughts on church discipline or accountability - posted by twayneb (), on: 2011/1/29 11:08**

I think many of us are hitting a key element in Biblical accountability, relationship. I think in every place you will find those for whom church is a place, a building, or a weekly activity and who cultivate very little genuine, honest relationship. Then you will find those who realize that the body of Christ functions in an atmosphere of honesty, accountability, and genuine spiritual relationship. Church leadership can do their best to cultivate an atmosphere of that lends itself to the latter, but ultimately if a person is not of a mind to surrender themselves completely to Jesus Christ, that person will never be accountable.

Because I am walking with Christ and have had Him transform me, I seek out accountability in my walk. I am open and honest about the issues that I deal with. As a leader, I must be careful how I do that, and I am blessed with a group of leaders that I walk with that understand true accountability and create an atmosphere where openness and honesty are the norm, not the exception. But ultimately that accountability is my own choice.

Discipline, I think, is related but is really another topic altogether. Leadership must be willing, with grace and love, to address situations and listen intently to the Holy Spirit and the Word of God in resolving these issues. I have seen people who are counseled and loved and at the same time asked not to come back for a period of time until they can decide to submit to God in an area. Obviously this is the exception. Usually lots of loving straight talk from the Bible and then follow up to enforce accountability in areas of discipline.

Blessings.