



# *The Christian Life Institute*

Friday, April 24

Thank you for joining us today, as we continue our series, at the Christian Life Institute, presented through 15-minute encouraging messages three times per week, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 12:45 Central time, on practical ways to grow forward in Christ in uncertainty, unpredictability, and upheaval.

This message is entitled: Accountability as Members of One Another

I was thinking the other day what a gift to be a part of His body and what a gift to share in the fullness of Christ. I also thought what a gift to have relationships with other Christ-followers; those who want to grow not only in their relationship with Him but with each other. I was then reminded of a current theme we have seen in the media, on house windows, on lawns – signs that say ‘we are in this together’ in reference to our current times – the message from a world perspective is, ‘you are not alone’, even when feeling sequestered, sheltered-in, or in a self-imposed quarantine. The message from Christ is we are never alone, as we are the temple of the living God (1 Corinthians 3:16), the Spirit resides in us (Romans 8:9), and from a Christ-centered perspective is that we are members of one another. Let’s read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27:

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to

the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”

We are one body and yet we are individually and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:13-14). We have an amazing opportunity, in all seasons, to come along side one another – in His love, in His truth, in His grace – to, as we read in Hebrews 10:25 “consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. [not] giv[ing] 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.” We have seen, although technology weary, that we can continue to gather as His body, through online church, virtual small groups, technology-driven Bible studies – through socially distancing walks, prayer, one-on-one technology-assisted conversations – we can see each other’s faces, we can hear each other’s voices, we can share in each other’s lives, and we can, during this time, cultivate accountability to our Lord, first and foremost, and to one another.

Accountability provides a vehicle by which we submit to one another for the purpose of growing one another forward. It provides a frame through which we develop trust, cultivate authenticity, and allow each other to speak into one another’s lives from a Christ-centric perspective. Accountability allows us to learn ownership for our choices, decisions, and actions – to be responsible and hold one another accountable, through the truth and love of Christ.

Accountability also provides a way for us to be answerable to one another, focusing on building and strengthening relationships with one another as we “are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” Accountability provides a space for sharing, in confidence, our heartfelt Christian sojourn in an atmosphere of trust with another Christ-follower. Accountability provides a

space for examination and reflection where we can discover our intent and motive for our choices, decisions, and actions – to seek answers together for deeper understanding to seek prayer, wise counsel, and guidance in areas where we struggle – in areas of weakness, temptation, and vulnerability.

Accountability fosters growth, learning, and encouragement. These precepts of accountability facilitate our following after Him who is ever-present and ever able so that we stay on the narrow road, asking for and receiving prayer, care, and support in our faith journey.

Although many relationships in life may be casual, superficial, limited – as humans we desire and need deep connections. God created us for His glory and for community. In Ecclesiastes 4:10-12 we read, “for if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! <sup>11</sup> Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? <sup>12</sup> And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” In Ephesians 5:17-25 Paul exhorts the church in Ephesus and you and I today, “Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.” In Colossians, Paul warns the church in Colossae and you and I, “do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self<sup>a</sup> with its practices <sup>10</sup> and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator..” In this space of accountability, we can have a place to open up, share, and be challenged in our walk in Christ, in living Christ as His surrendered vessel. Accountability places the goal of our spiritual formation front and center, which is Christian maturity, growth, and character derived from God working in us and our working out our faith with one another. Accountability equips us to share our lives with one another in a deep and introspective way which helps us learn not only about ourselves but also about the value and significance of others in a deeper, more intimate, and meaningful manner.

Unfortunately, some Christians have seen an accountability partner or small group as a place to vent all of their frustrations in life and although there are times when, yes, we need a place to vent, we need to be cautious because if all

we do is vent, we stay resentful, frustrated, and stagnant. Real growth cannot take place, as venting can be all consuming, feeds the flesh, and provides no time for instruction or feedback. The accountability space then faces the danger that it becomes a place to dump, gossip, feed the flesh and not grow forward in His love, truth, mercy, grace, and forgiveness. Accountability is not about just complaining about how life has dumped on us or a place to put others down; rather, it is a "compact" (a deeper agreement beyond a contract) and system on how to become more Christ-like (Psalm 133:1). An accountability space cherishes prayer, the Word, listening, and Christ-centric support of one another at its core.

Accountability is not about judgment or fleshly confrontation because of differences in non-essential doctrine, ideologies, or personal preferences. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, “for though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.” Accountability allows us to provide grace, focus on the needs of one another and do so for the sake of the Gospel.

While at times, we may need to be confronted and to confront one another, accountability is more about Christ-centric spurring on, exhorting one another to grow in Christ – not rebuking one another. Accountability helps instill the warning precepts that God has given us, but it also has the necessary support, counsel, encouragement, and affirmation we all crave and need. Accountability enables us to be “in Christ, we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others” (Rom. 12:5). This strengthens our connectedness and encourages us to lay aside the island, super-hero, or isolationist mentality. We do not stand independent of one another. Because such interdependency exists within the Body of Christ, we are responsible to come along side one another and grow each other forward in Christ..

The key to effective accountability is to allow our pride to yield to the necessity of being accountable to one another. Our justification in Christ is no escape from suffering, trials, temptations, as we know the world is still full of sin. Accountability is a starting point to build and develop character, patience, and dependence on God's grace, as Abraham did by faith; we are accountable for our choices. God approves when we are walking in Him! God does not approve when we are walking by ourselves, comfortable in our own petty presumptions, and ignoring pouring forward His love and truth!

Let us choose during disruption, discontent, upheaval, unpredictability – in every circumstance and season to live more consciously of placing God in His place of honor and of power and to have a confident expectation of His saving power. Let us choose to have our whole heart turned toward God and find accountability with one another. Pray the Lord lead you to an accountability partner today and continue your growth hand-in-hand with one another, as “we are members of His body.”

In this season, and life which is a journey of seasons, we as Christ-followers, have opportunities to, through His strength and His power reflect Him to a broken and hurting world – so, let us persevere and come together, even when technology weary.

Let us agree together to:

“Walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7)

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Thank you for joining us for Live Streaming on YouTube. Please join us again on Monday, April 27th at 12:45 CST. Please check out our other videos on YouTube and please subscribe to us on YouTube as we need 100 subscribers for our own YouTube channel. Please visit our website at [www.christianlifeinstitute.com](http://www.christianlifeinstitute.com) and join our mailing list, consider contributing to support these resources, and please pray for us.