

Will You Pray with Me?

Be Accountable to One Another – James 5:16

“Therefore, **confess your sins to one another**, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.”
James 5:16

If you are having a bad day, do you have someone you can call? What about a bad week or month?

Some of us would rather hold it in than to call someone. I am convinced that is not the best thing to do. We need to lean on each other.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a theologian and German Lutheran pastor during the time of World War II. He lectured on theology in Berlin and wrote several books during that time, but in 1933 moved from Berlin to London to pastor a church. As he watched the events unfolding in his country he was deeply moved with a sense of responsibility and went back to Germany to be a part of the underground resistance. In Germany, he lived in a house with other believers who were a part of this resistance. They developed deep, godly relationships. He understood fellowship and wrote *Life Together*. This book is a challenge to all concerning community and accountability.

He said, “The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer.”¹

What comes to mind when I mention the word “accountability”?

People have different ideas of accountability. Some see it as an invasion of privacy, others fear it because it may mean being more open than they want, while others see it as just a way to find out about others. James gives us an idea of what accountability in the church is in James 5:16.

James gives two imperatives: confess your sins and pray for one another.

Accountability is small groups of believers within the context of the church coming together to admit where they messed up and then to pray for each other. The conversations are not about the weather or sports. These conversations center around God and His work in the believer’s life.

When was the last time you had a conversation about God with a few other believers? What did you talk about?

What did you walk away with from that conversation?

¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer *Life Together* Harper Collins, New York, New York. 1954. pg 19.

“...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”
Hebrews 10:24-25

Some of us had to think hard about that question because either we cannot remember the last time we had a conversation like that or the conversation was not personal. Let's look at these two imperatives to get a better idea of what it means to be accountable to each other.

Confession seems like it is primarily an Orthodox Roman Catholic practice. In this belief system, you would enter a confessional and confess to a priest the wrongs you had committed. The priest would then forgive you of those wrongs.

Confession carries with it an aspect of acknowledging something, and in this case it acknowledges sins. In this imperative it is a continual action or repeated action. None of us have reached perfection yet, although there are some days where I think I am close, but my wife reminds me that I have a long way to go. Since we still struggle with sinful acts, James calls us to confess our sins to one another.

How does confessing our sins help us?

Sometimes we find it easier to confess our sins to God than to a brother in Christ. There is just something about confessing to someone standing in front of you, but confession helps us.

- It reminds us of our dependency. No man is an island unto himself. We are dependant first on God and then on each other as the church. Life can be hard and sometimes we need a shoulder to lean on. Struggles seem to come at us all at once and it is comforting to know that when I make a mistake, someone will be there to help me up. When I confess, I am reminded I am dependant on God and on you.

- It reminds us we are not alone. When we confess to each other, we come to realize that there are others who are facing similar battles and struggles. It gives us a sense of hope knowing that we are not standing alone in our fight to do right. I think of Elijah, who became discouraged. He thought he was the only one left, but God showed him he was not alone.

- It reminds us of our commitment. Confession brings a commitment to do right. If I am practicing confession then I will be more apt to choose correctly for fear of having to confess to another. I am reminded of my commitment to God and to others. Confession empowers me to do what is right.

We will all admit that we would like prayer, but when was the last time you prayed with someone?

The second aspect is to pray for one another. James gives this imperative and then shares the story of Elijah. Elijah prayed for rain and it rained. This is evidence of the power of prayer.

What was the last answer to prayer that you received? (It may not have been the way you wanted.)

“Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus.”
Romans 15:5

As we confess, we are sharing weakness. These weaknesses then become prayer requests. We then pray for each other.

How does praying for each other help us?

Prayer is a powerful tool in the life of the believer. The Reverend Jerry Falwell often said, “Nothing of eternal significance has ever been accomplished apart from prayer.”

- It builds intimacy. In prayer, we hear the hearts of those we pray with. This builds a spiritual intimacy with those people, but we also hear the perspective of those we pray with. This builds deepens our intimacy with God as we see Him through the eyes of another.
- It builds unity. Paul, in Romans 15, desires that the church be in one accord. Prayer is an avenue with which to accomplish that goal. As we pray with each other we come to the throne of God together with the same requests.
- It builds a defense. When we practice praying together, we develop together and will more likely pray for those same people when we are apart. This helps to build a defense against the enemy. The enemy cannot stand against a group of believers who are praying in one accord.

It is a powerful encouragement to know that others know my struggles and are praying with me to have victory over those struggles. I am not alone. I need to find a small group of believers with whom I can confess my sins and pray with on a regular basis.

I need accountability with one another. You do, too.

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

