



Side by Side Ministries  
September 2018 Prayer Focus

## AS IRON SHARPENS IRON SO **ONE MAN SHARPENS ANOTHER.**

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This year we've been comparing personal physical growth to how we grow spiritually. Another strong comparison would be just as we visit the doctor to keep us accountable for our physical health, we need others in our lives that will keep us accountable for our spiritual lives.

Accountability. Often times that word has a negative connotation, often bringing up images of rules and do's and don'ts. Actually, accountability is a tool that keeps us sharp. One of the first pieces of scripture I memorized as a young man was Proverbs 27:17. It reads, **"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."** Being accountable is asking someone you trust to come alongside you in an area you need to grow in. For example, in the past I had a terrible addiction. Now that addiction doesn't rule over me as it once did, but I have a trusted friend who will periodically ask me the tough questions to see if I'm doing well and I ask the same from him. I have another friend who just started asking me how I'm doing on my exercise regimen because that's becoming more and more important to me. If I screw up or become lackadaisical, I'm honest with both of them because they'll challenge me and ask me the difficult questions so I don't walk down that difficult path again. I'm transparent with them because my desire is to continually grow into the man of God that I've been designed to be. It is so important for all Christ followers to have at least one, if not two, other person/people in which to share struggles, to pray with, to listen to, and also to encourage.

As I've been looking into what it means to be accountable according to scripture I ran across Hebrews 3:13. It reads, **"But encourage one another daily, as long as it**

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**is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness."**

There are some really cool accountability principles in this piece of scripture. The first is the word 'encourage'. When we look at it in the Greek context (parakaleō) one of the definitions of that word is 'to encourage and strengthen'. That's one beautiful result of accountability. We are encouraged and strengthened. The other part that jumped out at me was the phrase that says 'as long as it is called Today...' When we're in the thick of it, when our defenses are down and we are weak, we are to call upon those that hold us accountable immediately! If you struggle with what you put before your eyes, are you browsing in a way that leads to trouble? If you can't control your spending and you're in the middle of the mall with your credit card in its holster ready to spring into action, what is your plan to get out of there? When you find yourselves in those positions that you know you're weak in know who you're going to call. Who is that person that will encourage and strengthen you?

Being accountable isn't just a one-way street. It's more than you calling for help when you're up to your knees in mud. When you hold someone accountable, you need to be purposeful in praying for them and asking the difficult questions. For example, if you were holding someone accountable that struggles with lust (man or woman) and I knew they were going on a business trip to Las Vegas, I would be purposeful in connecting with them to ask the difficult questions and to pray with them for strength and strategy while they were there.

When all is said and done, accountability is not a word to be dreaded, but rather it's a continuous process of keeping each other sharp so that we can grow, avoid the enemy's traps and not be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

### **Personal Reflection:**

Are there areas in your life that you need to grow in? Be honest. We all have areas that we are weak in. We all struggle. Scripture reminds us in Romans 3:23 that **"...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."** Where do you habitually fall short? Trust me, even if nothing comes to mind, there are some areas in your life where you struggle. Take some time to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal those areas. Once he does...

### **Personal Application:**

...take action! Pray about who it is to keep you accountable. Don't just pick a name out of thin air. Take the time to search out who it should be. Once you know, ask that person to come along side of you to ask the difficult questions. Ask them to not only be available when you struggle, but to be preventative and to pray for you often and to be purposeful in pursuing you.