

Standing Together

Lesson 2—Accountability 201

OVERVIEW

Background Bible Passage: 1 Samuel 15:10-23

Key Verse: Ecclesiastes 4:9-12—“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”

BEFORE CLASS

Preparation: *Your preparation will determine the direction your class will go.*

- Who keeps you accountable to living for Christ?
- How do you help others stay accountable to their faith?
- Study and prepare your lesson so that you are familiar with the teaching outline.
- Use the Contact 1-2-3 system to the right to follow up on students who have recently missed Sunday School.
- Pray for each student by name.
- Challenge students who have made recent decisions to continue following and growing in Christ.

CONTACT 1-2-3 SYSTEM

The first time a student is absent, give them a call. Following the second absence, send them a postcard. The third week they are absent, pay them a visit.

Think about it: What does it say to a student when they miss multiple weeks in a row and are never contacted? It says, “It really doesn’t matter if you’re here or not.”

Small things communicate great messages. Let the three “small” things above communicate that you care and miss your students when they are absent.

OPENING ACTIVITY

Get to Know You

As students enter, spend a few moments just chatting with them about what is going on in their lives, about where they go to school, about how school is going, etc. Don't spend a great deal of time on this, but be genuine in your interest and desire to get to know each of your students.

Discussion

- *What does it mean to keep someone accountable to Christ? (It means that you support and encourage them to continue following Christ and help them when they don't.)*
- *If you discovered that one of your best friends doing something you knew was wrong, what would you do? Would you bring it to their attention? How?*
- *If you were falling into sin, do you think that a real friend would bring it to your attention? Why or why not?*
- *Has there ever been a time in your life when someone corrected you? How did you feel? How did you respond? Are you glad they corrected you?*
- *Who, in your life, keeps you accountable and is there to help you make sure that you don't start to stray from God's path?*
- *If there were one thing you've seen or done that you could wipe from your mind forever, what would it be? (They don't have to answer this question if they don't want to.)*
- *If you were to have had a friend who was watching out for you spiritually, do you think you might have avoided this thing?*

TEACHING TIPS

Greet the students in your class personally before they enter your classroom. Your connection with them outside the class will determine your relationship with them inside the class.

BIBLE LESSON

Turn to 1 Samuel 15.

SAY: The Amalekites were a wicked and evil people whose sin had reached the point of God's judgment. So, through the prophet Samuel, God gave Saul, the king of Israel, instructions to totally destroy them. Now this sounds very odd to us but God knew that if their sin didn't stop, like a spiritual cancer, it would spread and greatly affect the people of Israel. God commanded King Saul to destroy everything, including their possessions—everything their sin had touched had to be destroyed. But King Saul didn't do what God had commanded. Instead he captured the king and also took *"the best of the sheep, cattle, and fatlings, as well as the young rams and the best of everything else. They were not willing to destroy them, but they did destroy all the worthless and unwanted things"* (1 Samuel 15:9). Listen to what happened next.

Choose volunteers to read—Read 1 Samuel 15:10-23

SAY: God sent Samuel to confront King Saul on account of his sin.

- *Do you think it was hard for Samuel to confront the King?* (Samuel never showed any fear even though the king could have ordered his execution. He probably knew that Saul wouldn't do this because the entire nation looked to Samuel as its spiritual leader. Saul, though, as we see later, could be a very unpredictable person.)
- *What was God's judgment against Saul for his actions?* (That God had rejected him as king.)
- *Do you think it was hard for Samuel to tell the king God's judgment against him?*
- *If you had been Samuel in this story, what would have been the hardest part for you?*
- *In what way did Samuel keep the king accountable?* (Verse 12 says, "Samuel got up to confront Saul...")

SAY: Keeping someone accountable is not just about confronting them if you see them falling into sin although this is probably the hardest part of keeping someone accountable. No one likes to be told that they are doing something wrong, but it's important that we always encourage each other to walk right with God and we help each other notice if we are going the wrong direction.

- *What are other ways you can keep someone accountable?* (The ten keys you discussed last week are below—See how many your students can name but don't spend a lot of time on this.)

The ten keys to help keep someone accountable*

- (1) Pray for the other person.
- (2) Look for ways to encourage them in their walk with Christ.
- (3) Be there for them when they need a friend.
- (4) Share meaningful Scripture passages with them.
- (5) Share with them what God is doing in your life (But never by way of bragging on yourself—All your boasting should always be in Christ.)
- (6) Ask if they're spending one-on-one time with Christ every day.
- (7) Ask what Bible verses they're memorizing and where they've been reading in the Bible.
- (8) Ask how their prayer time is going each day and what they are praying for.
- (9) Ask about what God has been doing in their lives and what He has been teaching them.
- (10) Be willing to ask them if there is sin in their life and to confront them if you see them begin to fall away from the Lord.

- *What are some ways you can help someone keep you accountable? There are three keys to letting someone keep you accountable to your faith in Christ—What do you think they are? (The three keys you discussed last week are below—See how many your students can name but don't spend a lot of time on this.)*

The three keys to letting others keep you accountable*

- (1) Be Open—Be open about what you are struggling with and where you are in your walk with Christ.
- (2) Be Honest—Don't try to hide or cover up what is going on in your life. Be honest about how you feel and with what you are struggling.
- (3) Be Willing—Be willing to confront your own short-comings and to remove or deal with any sin in your life.

KEY VERSE

Choose a volunteer to read—Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

- *How do these verses fit into today's lesson on accountability? (The whole idea behind being accountable and keeping others accountable is that two together are stronger than one alone. God has called us to help each other live the Christian life.)*
- *What did we do last week to illustrate these verses? (Tore into a phone book and broke sticks to show that two or more is stronger than just one alone.)*

KEY: We want to encourage you to find someone in our youth group who can keep you accountable and with whom you can be accountable.

- *What do you think would be the characteristics of a good accountability partner?*

The three top characteristics of a good accountability partner*

- (1) *In love with God*—Part 1 of the Great Command (Luke 10:27): “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind.”
- (2) *Cares about you*—Part 2 of the Great Command (Luke 10:27): “You shall love...your neighbor as yourself.”
- (3) *Knows when to talk and when to keep silent*— (Ecclesiastes 3:7b): “There is...a time to be silent and a time to speak.” A good accountability partner knows:
 - a. How to listen instead of always talking.
 - b. How to keep information shared with them confidential.

c. When to tell a teacher or a youth minister what a partner is struggling with.

- *As a good accountability partner, how would you handle the following situation: Your partner comes to you and says, "I need to talk to you but you have to promise never to tell anyone." What would you say? (You will find that many pastors, youth ministers, teachers, etc. would correctly answer that question by saying, "I don't make promises like that, but this is where you have to trust that I won't tell anyone what's going on unless I need to.")*
- *Do you think that having an accountability partner of the opposite sex is a good idea? (Absolutely NOT. When it comes to finding a specific accountability partner, guys need to be with guys and girls with girls.)*

WHY? Because...

- (1) There are issues that you might struggle with that you wouldn't want to discuss with the opposite sex.
- (2) There are also temptations that can creep into your relationship. We even encourage strong Christian couples not to pray *alone* together unless they are in a public place. It's just too easy to put yourself in an emotionally vulnerable situation in a private place where you might be tempted to act in ways that are contrary to God's plan for you.

SAY: Someday when you are married your husband or wife will become your greatest accountability partner, but even then, it's still important to have other believers to keep you accountable also.

- *What are the advantages and disadvantages of choosing close friends as accountability partners. (Advantages: Your close friends see how you live. It's hard to fool them. Disadvantages: What if you having a falling out with your best friend? Or you have a situation where you disagree and it's bothering you and normally you would share this with your accountability partner but the person with which you're having difficulty is your accountability partner.)*
- *What are the advantages and disadvantages of choosing a not-so-close friend, but someone in whom you see Christ as an accountability partner? (Advantages: They can see situations in your life more objectively because they're not a part of what's going on in your life every day. Disadvantages: They don't see how you live every day because they're not around you all the time.)*

CHALLENGE: Consider what kind of accountability partner you would like to have and find someone who can keep you accountable this semester.

It's okay to choose:

- (1) Close friends
- (2) Acquaintances in our youth group in whose life you see Jesus
- (3) Someone to whom you think you can minister

- (4) Someone you think can minister to you
- (5) Someone a few years older than you
- (6) Someone a few years younger than you

WRAP IT UP

SAY: Don't blow off the importance of accountability. There's a reason that Jesus sent His disciples out two by two, that Paul always traveled with at least one partner, that God sent the prophet Nathan to David to keep him accountable, that God used the prophet Samuel to keep King Saul accountable, etc. There is more strength in two or three than one alone.

Prayer Time

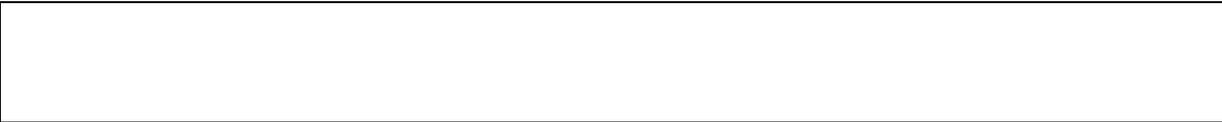
Pray specifically that God will build relationships in our youth so that they can effectively keep each other accountable to living for Christ.

TEACHING TIPS

Before class next week look for opportunities to ask students about their week or to refer back to last week's prayer requests— i.e., How is your grandma doing? How did you do on your big test, etc.

List prayer requests below and on the back of this page and pray for your students throughout the week. *Ask if any of your students want to pray today.*

Prayer Requests



*Taken from an old Lifeway Resources youth curriculum—Issue and number not known.