

Who Holds the Church Accountable?

Intro: You probably haven't noticed, but there's been an epidemic of Accountability-itis in the North American church. Clergy who are less-than-faithful in their wedding vows. Priests who abuse their positions. And a slew of "Christians" who behave immorally and unethically. The sad thing is, in most of these cases, there's little or no accountability - sometimes even when they're caught red-handed, so to speak. The word *accountability* has a bad rap to it in the church. People would rather *not* be held accountable. Why? First, if we held someone accountable for their actions we might be accused of *JUDGING* them. Second, if we held someone accountable we're afraid it would cause dissension and somebody might leave the church. And third, if we hold somebody accountable, someone else might decide to hold *us* accountable too. And none of us really want to be held accountable.

So, who holds us accountable? And *how* do we get held accountable? It's not just about the final judgment - it's about being accountable today. And that's the topic for this week's *Articulations*. When you finish, you'll have discovered who holds the church accountable and how (remember, church = people, i.e., *you*).

What the Bible Teaches: Break into Groups of Four, read the following Bible verses, and discuss the questions. You may want to jot down notes and thoughts on the back of this page.

For each passage, discuss and decide who held (or holds) whom accountable - and for what.

Acts 5:1-5; Acts 11:1-5, 18; Acts 15:1-6; Acts 14:21-23; Acts 15:36; Acts 18:24-26; Ephesians 5:21; Hebrews 10:24-25; Matthew 18:15-17; James 5:16

Discuss the following: Who held Peter accountable? Who held Paul accountable? Who held the house churches accountable? Who holds believers accountable today?

What I Believe: Take ten minutes for silent reflection and thought. Ask yourself what you believe about accountability. Use the back of this page to formulate a response to the question:

“Who holds the church accountable?”

Write your final response here: _____

Articulations: Pair up with one other person and share your response with one another. Take five minutes each. Try to *not* look at your written statement; instead, try to tell your beliefs from your heart. This will prepare you to share whenever you are asked about what you believe.

Therefore: Jesus said His followers should Go and make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). One of the first steps in making disciples is being ready and able to share the reason for the hope we have (1 Peter 3:15), in other words, knowing what we believe, why, and then being able to share it. Sharing your faith is important. This week, find someone—it can be *anyone*—and articulate your belief about this issue. If you have an unchurched/unreached friend whom you can share with, all the better (you can always say you have a homework assignment from church and you'd like to share it with them). Be ready to talk about your experience next week over the meal at your House Church.