

TRUEish Series – Part 6

Accountability

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Good morning. Today is our last message in our sermon series “True-ish.” Our hope behind this series has been to give you six tests that you can use when attempting to discern the difference between something that is true and something that is only true-ish.

Our hope is that if you are reading a book, or talking to a friend, listening to a talking head on TV, that you would be able to discern the truth. So how can you test to see if this teacher, preacher, leader or expert is saying something true?

- 1. Authority of the Bible**
- 2. Principles of Interpretation**
- 3. Practicing Faith in Community**
- 4. The Fruit Test**
- 5. Self-Empowerment or Christ Empowerment**

- 6. Accountability**

The truth is that accountability is woven into the fabric of the kingdom of God. That any teacher, preacher, expert, who is not accountable to a certain set of values or a team of leadership over them, that voice has the potential to be a very dangerous voice.

There are no lone rangers in the kingdom of God. There are no Mavericks in the kingdom of God.

We all need accountability.

We don't like accountability. For some it's a prideful rebellious spirit that seeks its own way. I don't let anyone tell me what to do. For others, it comes from a broken spirit. Ones that's been criticized and made to feel less than. Just the thought of being critiqued stirs up old feelings of insecurity, unworthiness and even feeling unsafe.

And so, we retreat from any relationship or environment or measurement.

But accountability is so important.

Story about Brian.

Without digging a little without probing to see what was underneath, I would have missed what was going on under the surface.

Our concern is that there are many voices, authors, leaders, who are orbiting around the church and they can look like the church and sounds like the church, but they are not. And one of the ways to discern if they are a voice worth listening to is to examine who they are accountable to.

I really want to do two things today. I want to introduce you to this test of accountability. And secondly, I want to encourage you to become an accountable person. When we bring this idea down to a personal practical level and we start living lives that are accountable then we hear teachings from people who aren't accountable to anyone it will be unattractive.

In order to talk about accountability, we have to take a step back and talk about values. The values of any person, teacher, leader or organization are a list of the most important things that they do. This is what drives us. This is who we are. This is our mission.

1. Clear values make accountability possible.

The reason many people feel lost and confused about life, they have no sense of purpose or passion is because they haven't done the hard work of defining their values. Discovering what is really important to them. Writing down what they were built for.

We live in such a reactive culture. We are being pushed around, being told what is important, what to buy, what to believe. If we are not careful, we can find our lives are really us living out a script that was written for us by someone we don't even know.

Why do you do what you do? Why do you think what you think? Why do you buy what you buy? Why do you say what you say?

In each of these areas of your life do the answers to these questions come from deeply rooted values that are the foundation for your life, or are you simply going with the flow acting like the rest, mirroring the culture around you?

Jesus and Peter (John 21:15-17)

- End of John
- Post resurrection
- Peter had denied Jesus
- Awkward tension
- Peter is fishing.
- Goes back to old life
- Do you have any fish?
- Jesus doesn't even use their fish.
- Jesus goes right for Peter's gut, deep down to the core of who he is to the foundational value of his life.

John 21:15-17

¹⁵**When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"**

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

¹⁶Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

¹⁷The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.

Jesus is drill deep into Peter’s value system, two core convictions, two essential truths about who he is.

I love Jesus.

Jesus called me to care for his people.

Peter walked away from this conversation with a tattoo on his soul. He came face to face not with something he was told to do, but who he really was. What he truly believed. And it changed the rest of his life.

When I was a kid, we used to sing a song, “I have a river of life.”

I believe that, I value that. I want that. I want my life to reflect that and my time to honor that. And sometimes it does, and sometimes it doesn’t. That’s why accountability is so important. Clear values make accountability possible.

I want to take this first point one step further because it’s so important. Clear values make accountability possible. Understanding the values of the people that we are following, learning from, the people we are allowing to speak into our lives. And knowing who they are accountable to and how they are accountable to them.

In fact, even Peter needed to be held accountable.

Galatians 2:11-21 (NLT)

¹¹ But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him to his face, for what he did was very wrong. ¹² When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile believers, who were not circumcised. But afterward, when some friends of James came, Peter wouldn’t eat with the Gentiles anymore. He

was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision. ¹³ As a result, other Jewish believers followed Peter's hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

¹⁴ When I saw that they were not following the truth of the gospel message, I said to Peter in front of all the others, "Since you, a Jew by birth, have discarded the Jewish laws and are living like a Gentile, why are you now trying to make these Gentiles follow the Jewish traditions?"

I want to sit on personalizing this for a minute because I want you to consider writing out some values. What are your God values? What has God called you to?

I've been working on this personally.

Man of God

I want to genuinely be a man of God in my private and public worlds.

Husband

I want to be an exceptional husband. I want Tracy to be proud of me and to trust me. I want her to live in peaceful security because of me. I will use my energy, time, and resources to support her in realizing her God given dreams, calling, and purpose on this earth.

Father

I want to be an exceptional father. I want to meet my children's physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs. I want them to know I support them, love them, and will be a constant resource to them of good things.

Leader

I want to be an exceptional leader. I want people to be at rest when I am in charge. I want them to know if I am leading, they will be safe, cared for and thought of. I want to lead honestly, with integrity, with wisdom, and consistency.

I want you to know that I don't only kind of want these things. I had to go through a long process to dig deep into who God has created me to be to find these values. It took a long time.

You must also know that there is zero chance of me accomplishing any of these values on my own. Zero chance. If I was to say that I can do this without an outside perspective, or brutally honest feedback from people who love me. It would be a bold-faced lie.

2. Scripture instructs us to be accountable.

I just heard a well-known leader say that most people's thoughts on friendship are completely unbiblical. We want friends who say nice things about us and make us feel special and never say anything about our faults and weaknesses. He said that does not sound like a friend to me, it sounds way more like Satan.

Listen to what scripture says about our relationships.

Ephesians 4:25

²⁵Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

Proverbs 11:14

¹⁴For lack of guidance a nation falls, but victory is won through many advisers.

Proverbs 15:22

²²Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

Proverbs 27:17

¹⁷As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

Galatians 6:1-2

6 Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently.

Proverbs 12:15

¹⁵The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice.

Matthew 18:15-17

¹⁵“If your brother sins, against you, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over.

Proverbs 27:6

⁶Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.

Scripture is saturated with accountable relationships. I will not let you fail relationships. I believe in you too much not to tell you the truth relationships.

One of the more exciting things for me here at Petra has been something we have been doing as staff and ministry leaders. We took on the challenge of writing down our leadership values. The task was how we capture our culture on paper. We believe we have something special here at Petra. We want to keep it and pass it on to our children. What are the values that drive our culture, specifically in our leadership?

As staff and leadership team, we came up with five values or habits.

Creating habits and values across all ministry platforms. Who we are and how we act. Values need to be expressed through reproducible habits.

1. Culture of Honor

“We elevate everyone around us; we show appreciation verbally and visibly.”

2. Grace & Truth

“We help them heal, and we address the mess.”

3. Impartation

“We give to others what we are being given.”

4. Personal Excellence

“We think like an owner; grow like a champion.”

5. Release the Team

“Can someone else do it before I do? – don’t do it alone.”

As we have been processing this value of grace and truth with our team, I’ve been really praying how do we create this biblical culture of truth telling, giving feedback out of love. Iron sharpening iron. Saying hard things or uncomfortable things to one another. Literally relating to each other like Jesus would relate to us with grace and truth.

I was getting really hung up on coming up with a system of how to say the truth. I was looking for an acronym.

I feel like the Holy Spirit really led me to this idea that it is so easy to get caught up in how to tell someone the truth or how to confront. How do I give feedback? Instead of getting caught up in all that, simply start asking for it from others. How am I doing?

I believe it has to start at the top of our leadership and with our ministry leaders. We need to be a people who are pursuing feedback, pursuing accountability.

We just talked about this on Tuesday as staff and we all agreed we will begin to lead like this.

It’s the James 5:16 model for leadership feedback.

James 5:16

¹⁶Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

The person who has sinned goes to the person and voluntarily provides information.

The person in leadership voluntarily seeks feedback and accountability from their team. They admit shortcomings and work intentionally to grow in those areas.

When you are listening to a voice in the culture, ask what their values are and who are they accountable to. The lie is that we can go on in our lives without accountability. None of us are bullet proof.

When asking for feedback, only ask people you really trust. Know that your immediate and long-term reaction to what they say will determine if they will ever answer that question honestly again. Take time to think about what was said to you and receive from it what you can.

If someone asks you for feedback or accountability and asks you how they are doing, understand that you are on sacred relational ground. Step very softly. If you answer wisely you might be invited back. This is not the time to unload fifteen years of pent-up resentment. Play the long game.

Ultimately, we are all going to be accountable to God one day why not get some help.

Romans 14:12

So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

Closing