

Session 8

Relational Integrity

“Friendly but Friendless?”

Goals for growth:

- ☒ Identify the barriers to male accountability.
- ☒ Be willing to become accountable to other men.
- ☒ Learn to confess your sins to another man.

Friendless American males live in isolation from others more commonly than you think. How amazing that we can physically stand a few inches from another man's face yet remain hundreds of miles away from him in terms of making an emotional connection.

Out of fear of exposure we all live in our own private worlds, thinking we can work out our own problems. For years we God's men have projected an image that we have it all together, that we're just fine. This leaves us vulnerable to a dangerous pattern. When sin creeps in – rather than seeking another man's help in standing against it – we cover up our pain and failure and go stealth.

Every Christian will sometimes mess up. The question is, Who's going to bring us back from the edge?

KEY VERSES

¹³ *Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise.* ¹⁴ *Is anyone among you ill? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord.* ¹⁵ *And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven.* ¹⁶ *Therefore 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.*

¹⁷ *Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.* ¹⁸ *Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.*

¹⁹ *My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back,* ²⁰ *remember this: whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.*

James 5:13-20

¹¹ *Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.* ¹² *It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.* ¹³ *But everything exposed by the light becomes visible – and everything that is illuminated becomes a light.* ¹⁴ *This is why it is said:*

‘Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’

Ephesians 5:11-14

CONNECT WITH THE WORD

1. Why is it the responsibility of the one who is sick or suffering to call on the elders for prayer? What do you think James is trying to get us to do?
2. How does praying with another person help us through our problems? When have you benefited from this?

3. How does un-confessed sin create roadblocks to spiritual growth? Where do you see such blockages in your life?
4. Why do you think we should confess our sins to one another? What good will it do? (See Ephesians 5:11-14) Have you ever benefited from confession to another man? Explain. According to James 5:16, what is the benefit of confessing our sin?
5. What will God do through you when you take accountability seriously (verses 15-16, 19-20)?
6. How can we actually turn another person from sin?
7. Why do you think James referred to Elijah in this passage? In what ways does the reference to Elijah strengthen the case for having an accountability partner?

REVIEW

Describe how praying with others has impacted your life. What difference might it make in future?

What role models for friendship do you have either in cultural expressions like film or music or in reality? Explain what you value most about friendship.

VIDEO TEACHING

God has _____ men to deliver justice.

We must let God and _____ into our journey.

There is a war on for your _____ with other men.

_____ makes you vulnerable to Satan's attack.

Secrets give _____ power in your life.

VIDEO FEEDBACK

In the video Kenny shares that men have the ability to refine one another like iron sharpening iron. What does he mean? Give examples from your life.

Kenny describes Satan's desire to devour God's men. How can we possibly be victorious over such a powerful foe? How can our friends help?

CONNECT WITH THE GROUP

I (Todd) was hardly married five years before a good buddy came up to me and said, "Todd either you go get help, or I'm going straight to the Pastor with this." That got my attention. All right, then, the last thing I needed on my hands was full exposure of a problem I'd been battling for five years. My marriage! Gee thanks Matt, ole buddy, friend, traitor, tattletale, bonehead. So I took the initiative and went to marriage counselling with my wife. I never realized how much trouble I was in until I sat in the counsellors office and he said "Let's begin with where it hurts."

My wife and I began bawling like babies.

As I look back I realize that I might never have gotten there and done the hard work of shoring up my marriage if it hadn't been for my buddy Matt. He saved me from a firestorm. My wife was just hanging on and I didn't even know it. I'd clearly neglected her emotionally while I was busy going to seminary. The irony of that kills me to this day. How could I have let that happen? Thanks Matt, I owe you one.

1. If possible, describe a time when you were saved from a relational firestorm.
2. Why do you think men choose not to open up with one another about their struggles?
3. Read Proverbs 28:13. What are the consequences of leading an unconfessed, secretive life?

Transparency and authenticity are key in overcoming the Evil One and living as God's men.

4. Pastor Rick Warren says, "you are as sick as your secrets." Steve Arterburn adds, "Openness is to healing what secrets are to sickness." In what ways does isolation breed sickness in our souls? Do you think God expects us to heal in isolation? What connection does James 5:13-20 make between sickness and sin?
5. What would life look like if God's men practiced biblical confession? What impact do you think our prayers can have on others who are in trouble?

Pride often stands in the way of a man living with relational integrity. Remember, God humbles the proud and exalts the humble.

6. Read Galatians 6:1-5. When might it be right to "go after" another man caught in sin?
7. Who in your life could you trust with your darkest secrets? Are you willing to ask this friend to hold you accountable? Why or why not?
8. Consider a specific struggle you face. Pray for the wisdom to know in whom you can confide about that situation, then write the name of a man with whom you'll share. Commit to talking with him about your situation the next time you get together.

WRAP

Men, you have to have a male friend for accountability. Men become men in the company of men, not women. James said that there will come a time when you will either suffer, grow sick or sin. Who will be there for you when that happens.

Think about it. Who in your life notices when you are living on the edge of sin? Who notices when things are not right with you – and then asks you about it? Can you name a friend invaluable to your spiritual well-being?

If you are to have victory over the Enemy, you must live with, relational integrity – and that begins with accountability.

Remember these key thoughts from this week's study:

- We must become accountable to other men.
- We need to confess our sins to other men.
- The Enemy wants us isolated; God wants us connected.
- Living with secrets will keep us from being God's men.