

ACCOUNTABILITY AND REPORTING



Means of Accountability

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

“Whoever heeds instruction is on the path to life, but he who rejects reproof leads others astray.” Proverbs 10:17

“Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.” Proverbs 13:20

“The ear that listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise. Whoever ignores instruction despises himself, but he who listens to reproof gains intelligence.” Proverbs 15:31-32

“Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future.” Proverbs 19:20

“Like a gold ring or an ornament of gold is a wise prover to a listening ear.” Proverbs 25:12

“Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.” Proverbs 27:17



QUOTES

“Never promise more than you can perform.” Publilius Syrus

“Always do what you promise.” Anna Stroope



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

As a result of the readings, discussion and activities in this session, the candidate should be able to ...

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- Discuss how means assist with accountability
- Use a specific process as a way of forming accountability
- Construct an initial six-month accountability agreement

... in order to stay faithful in their life commitments and witness to Christ.

It is not enough to want to be accountable or to seek accountability. Good accountability happens in large part because good and appropriate means are in place and there is a commitment to use these means. In this session, we want to learn about a specific accountability tool and practice defining accountability through its use. The hope is that this will provide a tangible way of implementing accountability that will shape your life and strengthen your witness.

CASE STUDY: JIM AND CHERYL

Jim and Cheryl Smith left their church and friends with much fanfare and excitement. They arrived in their new city to begin life and ministry among a people for whom they had prayed for years. They finally arrived for an assignment for which they had been preparing since college. They dove right into what looked important – arranging housing, locating the nearest market, buying a vehicle, and finding their way around town. They made it through the first month, the second, the third, without much trouble. They made friends with other expatriates and received lots of helpful advice about how to live and what things to watch out for. Jim and Cheryl found many ministries that they could jump into immediately. All of it looked worthwhile. The problem was deciding what they would do.

After being in their city for eleven months, they received an email from Steve, the mission pastor at their church, stating he would be making a visit “to assess how they were doing.” Jim and Cheryl met Steve as he arrived at the airport, and from the moment they got in the car, they both talked non-stop about all they were doing. With much enthusiasm, they took him to various ministries and to meet different people.

On the night Steve was to leave the country, he and the Smiths had dinner at a restaurant near the airport. As they ate, Steve bit by bit began critiquing everything that the Smiths were

WHERE DID WE GO WRONG?

doing. It seemed as though everything was wrong. Steve asked why they had not found a language teacher and why they were not learning to speak the local language. Jim explained that he was not against learning language but that there was so much to be done and that he had found that so much could be done through an interpreter. Steve questioned their two-day-a-week involvement with a local orphanage. Jim countered that the orphanage had lost staff and thus was in desperate need of help. Also, helping with the children required little to no language skills. Steve did not like the fact that Jim was preaching and Cheryl was playing the piano for the expatriate fellowship in the city. Once again, they explained that there was a need and they were trying to meet it.

After dinner, Jim and Cheryl dropped Steve at the airport and returned home. They sat in their car outside their house and talked for a long time. Both were discouraged rather

than encouraged by Steve's visit. They felt as though they had been unfairly criticized and reprimanded rather than affirmed. Even though they had jumped into activity and had sought to meet needs, it was all wrong in Steve's eyes. Somehow they were not on the same page with Steve and were apparently not operating from the same priorities. Cheryl asked her husband, "Aren't we ministering to people? Isn't this what Steve and the Sending Council sent us here to do? Where did we go wrong?"

REFLECT #1

As you think about the story of Jim and Cheryl ...

1. What went wrong?
2. What could have been done to put everyone on the same page?

Because they had different sets of assumptions and expectations, Jim and Cheryl and Steve and the Sending Council did not have a common understanding from which to operate or a common basis from which to evaluate progress. They also did not have an established system for regular, clear, open communication on the field with their sending church. It is obvious that a good means of accountability was needed in order to establish a common vision, to set expectations, and to evaluate progress toward their shared mission. Without good means, good intentions go awry and good people are hurt.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD MEANS

In order for accountability means to be effective and useful, they need to be simple, shared, measurable, adaptable, and comprehensive.

Clear and Simple

The accountability tool used needs to be easy to understand, with a clear structure and simple requirements.

Shared

Accountability must be negotiated in order for there to be shared vision. It is crucial that you understand what it is that you are agreeing to do. There should be no surprises in accountability. You should fully understand and agree to the standards to which you will be measured, and know what questions will be asked. Not knowing what is coming and being 'trapped' by some question out of the blue lead to mistrust and broken relationships. If accountability is not fully discussed and negotiated, then expectations, goals, and roles are murky and unclear.

Measurable

If there is not some way of measuring, then expectations cannot be met and evaluated. This is probably the hardest part of constructing a good accountability agreement between parties. While church leaders may think that they are being kind and gracious toward deployed people by avoiding accountability tools that require counting and measuring progress toward goals, they actually are not being helpful. If people do not know what is expected, do not know what enough is, and then get blindsided by unstated goals, they resent and mistrust the process of accountability. Measurability produces integrity and reliability of means.

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Adaptable

The means of accountability should not be like a straight-jacket. One size does not fit all. Means should provide ample form and structure, and yet, flexible enough to bend with each situation and every person. Those who are accountable should be able to personalize the means of accountability so that it fits them and their situation.

Comprehensive

The tool used must address structural, strategic, and spiritual accountability. Once again, it is like a three-legged stool. If one leg is missing or too short, then the stool does not function properly. We are more than our work, more than our families, more than our religious practices. Because we are multi-faceted individuals, good means of accountability will encompass the various arenas of our lives.

PRIORITY, ROLES, OBJECTIVES, AND PARTNERS – PROP

A useful tool for accountability is the PROP Accountability Agreement. This is a one- to two-page accountability agreement that is negotiated between yourself and your supervisor(s). Usually, it covers a six-month time frame, depending on the situation. It provides an opportunity for you to state in writing the priority of the mission and your roles, objectives, and partners in accomplishing this mission.

Each component of the PROP will be described along with how the whole document is to be used. After each component, you will be asked to draft an appropriate response for where you are now. By the end of the session, you will have developed a draft version of a personal accountability plan for the next six months. You will be ready to review it with the person(s) you are accountable to during the Candidate training process.

PRIORITY STATEMENT

While there are many things you could do, roles you could play, objectives you could try to accomplish, and any number of people and organizations with whom you could partner, you must determine the most crucial or essential roles, objectives, and partners. Accountability means making decisions about what is key or necessary and the pursuing these with determination and excellence. A life unfocused is one that is pushed by whatever is at hand or whatever the distraction might be at the moment.

Naming your priorities is a way of being intentional or focused with your time, talents, opportunities, and resources. Unless you prioritize, you will be all over the map, doing whatever calls for your attention. The main problem in the case study is that Jim and Cheryl did not know what the priority was, so they did whatever seemed worthwhile based on immediate need.

So, the first act of accountability is to set the priority. Usually, this is not done in isolation but is a collective activity. The priority is what your church or the group you are working with says is to be accomplished. It is a short, one-sentence statement that sums up the overarching goal of your life and witness.

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Here are some examples of Priority Statements:

To love God and love my neighbor in such a way that Christ is made known and churches are planted among Kurds of Northern Iraq.

To faithfully follow Christ among and give witness to the Buginese people so that they know and follow Christ.

To live as a disciple of Jesus Christ, give witness to his life and death, and gather new believers into faith communities so that Christ will be glorified in Lebanon.

REFLECT #2

1. In what ways are the above Priority Statements different?
2. In what ways are they similar?

Each of the sample Priority Statements above is unique in that it fits the assignment or locale and is specific to the commitments and aims of the sending church or group. And yet, while a good Priority Statement is flexible, there are some common characteristics. A good Priority Statement should be

- Overarching and broad (love God, love neighbor, follow Christ)
- Localized and personal (Kurds of Northern Iraq, the Buginese)
- Comprehensive and long-term in scope
- Inclusive of life and work
- Inspiring and worthy

While personal in tone and intent, your Priority Statement should be the collective statement of the overall intent or desire of your church or sending group. In some cases, you will be informed of a Priority Statement that has been already worked out by others (the Sending Council, Elders, Mission Advisory Team, et. al.). You need to be sure that this statement also represents your commitment and heart, as you will be asked to labor toward seeing this statement become a reality. If you don't know the priority or the intent, then how can you define the roles and objectives of your life and ministry?

If you know the long-term Priority Statement of your sending group or church for your particular assignment, then write it below. If you do not know what it is, then write out what you feel it should be. This will provide a starting point for you and those to whom you are responsible to begin a conversation about the Priority Statement.

Priority Statement:

In your workbook for this section write out your priority statement.

Once a Priority Statement is initially developed, it is not set in stone but can be changed or nuanced. In fact, it should be revisited regularly to ensure that it still represents everyone's commitments and also to remind yourself of why you have been sent and what the aim of your sending is.

As you go through the process of formulating your PROP document, the Priority Statement

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will be the first item you will develop. Everything else must conform to it and flow from it. It sets the tone for the rest of the accountability document.

ROLES

What **Roles** will you play during this accountability period in order to pursue the **Priority Statement**? A way of looking at your roles in a comprehensive manner is to think about your responsibilities in the structural, strategic, and spiritual arenas of life. Below are descriptions of these three arenas, as discussed in the previous session.

Structural

Accountability in the area of structure includes roles related to finances, the maintenance of visas, attendance at required meetings, and scheduled contact with the supervisor. In order for life and ministry to operate as it should, roles related to structure must be in place and maintained.

Strategic

Accountability in the area of strategy includes roles related to witness, efforts toward church planting, participation in ministry activities, and the implementation of projects.

Spiritual

Accountability in the area of spirituality includes roles necessary for one's walk with the Lord and relationships with others. While this may be more difficult to measure, there are activities which are indicators of how well one is doing in these roles.

So, what roles will you play in each of these arenas?

In the arena of **structure**, you might be

- Bookkeeper
- Reporter
- Short-term team coordinator
- Supervisor
- Supervisee

In the arena of **strategy**, you might be

- Language Learner
- Church Planter
- Trainer
- Planner
- Researcher
- Partner

In the arena of **spiritual**, you might be

- Husband / Wife
- Father / Mother

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- Disciple
- Church Leader
- Accountability Partner

You may feel that most of these roles are obvious, and thus, there is no need to state them. And yet, it is important for everyone involved to know and affirm what roles are being pursued. **It is better to state and find agreement on the obvious than to assume and later discover misunderstanding.**

Be careful to name roles that are narrow and realistic rather than broad and inclusive. Remember you cannot and should not be everything. You must narrow your activity to the most important roles and pursue them with diligence and excellence. You will be continually making the decision between good and best. The aim is to define what you are called to be and do in the pursuit of the Priority Statement.

After you have given each role a title, each needs to be descriptively expanded in order to personalize the role for your situation and for this particular period of time. For example,

Language Learner: I will study, practice, and acquire the dialect of Mandarin Chinese used in Beijing.

Church Planter: I will work to gather believers and soon-to-be-believers into worshipping communities of faith.

Father: I will love, care for, discipline, and guide Cory and Katie.

Disciple: I will follow the commands of Jesus and become more like Him in character and attitudes.

If the role of Language Learner had been clearly defined for Jim and Cheryl, they would have had the freedom to say no to other roles (interim pastor, pianist, orphan caretaker). Plus, if Steve could have helped the Smiths see how being a Language Learner helps them achieve their Priority Statement, this would have helped them accept and give attention to this role. However, as Cheryl's questions show, they had no concept of why the role of Language Learner was important or that it was even a priority.

In articulating your Roles for the next six months, do more than just list role titles (Disciple, Coordinator, Trainer), but give as much personal definition as you can to each of your roles. Try to be comprehensive by thinking through the structural, strategic, and spiritual arenas of your life.

ROLES

Write out your Roles for the next six months? Expand each with a personal descriptive sentence.

OBJECTIVES

What **Objectives** are necessary in order to pursue the **Priority Statement** and to fulfill your **Roles**? An Objective is a stated goal or intent toward which effort must be expended in order

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for it to be achieved or accomplished. Thus, an Objective must be stated as an end result. It also must be measurable in order to determine if that end result has been achieved or not.

For example, let's say that your Priority Statement is: *To faithfully follow Christ among and give witness to the Buginese people so that they know and follow Christ.* In order to pursue this priority, you have determined that one of your current Roles must be that of a Language Learner. As a Language Learner, you have stated that you must be able to teach and preach in the Buginese language. So, your objectives for the first six months might include ...

- Secure a Buginese native speaker who will serve as a language informer.
- Attend language classes (twice a week) at the Buginese cultural center.
- Spend two hours a day in conversation with Buginese people in the market and other social settings.

Each objective has a simply-stated intent that is measurable. You should be able to say whether or not you secured a language informer, whether you attended classes two times a week, and whether you spent two hours a day conversing in Buginese.

OBJECTIVES

List at least three specific Objectives related to your Roles for the next six months.

PARTNERS

Who will be your **Partners** in fulfilling these **Roles** and achieving these **Objectives**?

Partners are those people and organizations who participate directly or indirectly in the accomplishment of the **Priority Statement**.

These may not necessarily be your colleagues, best friends, or even believers. These may be aware of your specific Roles and Objectives, or they may be “blind partners” who are part of the circumstances in which you live and minister. Whatever their level of knowledge concerning your life and witness, they are significant and important participants in your calling and mission.

Partners Now (prior to deployment during candidate training) might include the following:

Individuals

- Pastor of sending church
- Facilitators of PANORAMA sessions
- Bible teacher
- Advocates
- Family members

Groups

- Local congregation
- Sending church council

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- Cross-cultural ministries
- Sending church missions teams

Partners Later (after deployment) might include the following:

Individuals

- Language teacher or informer
- Local pastor
- Local evangelist
- Bible school teacher
- Translator
- Aid worker
- Expatriate church planter with another organization
- Village headman
- Landlord
- Technology support person
- Neighbor

Groups

- Local congregation
- Organization under which you work or have a visa
- Government agency
- Non-government organization
- Ministry of Health
- Translation organization
- Medical teams
- Sending church prayer team
- US Embassy

Specifically naming your partners is an acknowledgment that you are not alone and do not work alone but need others as you pursue your roles and objectives. By naming them, you inform your supervisor of these individuals and groups and your collaboration with them.

Make a list of the Partners you have at this point in your cross-cultural witness preparation. This list of current Partners will probably not include overseas or national individuals and groups but does include those in the church body who facilitate your training, the Mission Sending Council, your advocacy group, and colleagues in ministry.

PARTNERS

Who are your Partners for the next six months?

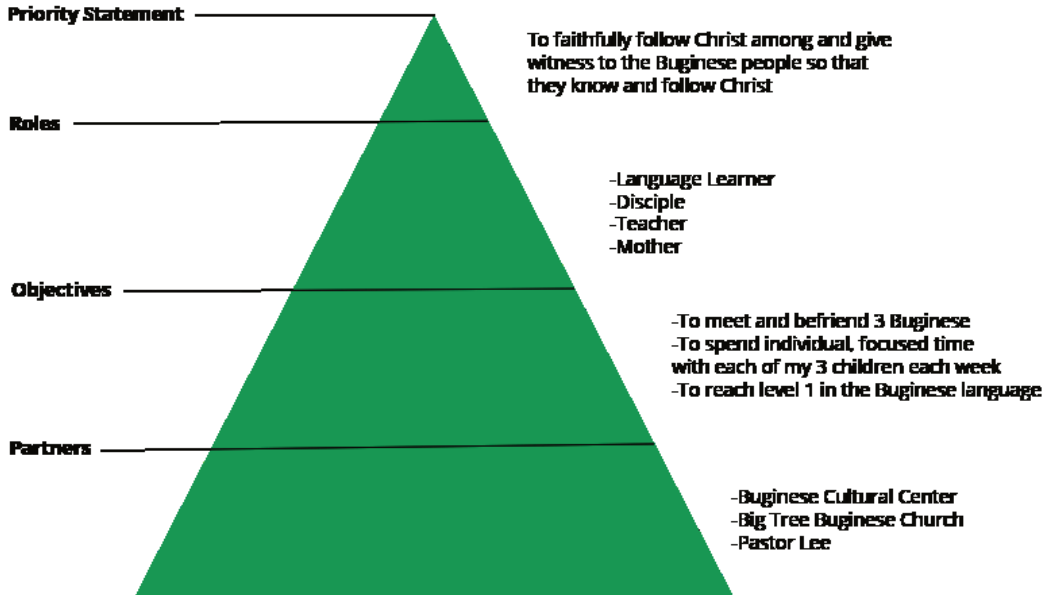
AN INTEGRATIVE WHOLE

The various components of the PROP accountability agreement are not disconnected pieces but part of an integrative whole. Your Priority Statement is like the point of an arrow whose

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movement toward the target is supported by the shaft and the feathers. The point leads the way and everything else including Roles, Objectives, and Partners follows.

Or it is like the pinnacle of a pyramid. It is the high point supported by the other components, as they broaden below it as illustrated in the example below:



Each component is an important part of your total mission. In this way, they work together to create an integrated identity and all-embracing witness.

PROP ACCOUNTABILITY AGREEMENT

Now that we have walked through each of the components of a PROP accountability agreement, it is time to put them together into the full document. You can create your first PROP on the form below. Your Time Period begins with today's date and ends with a date six months in the future.

Your aim is to identify and articulate your Priority, Roles, Objectives, and Partners for this period of time.

Once you are finished, you will want to share this with whomever you are accountable. If this is undefined at this time, then share your document with the person nearest you (spouse, friend, facilitator, pastor, et. al.). Ask this person to put their signature at the bottom of the document alongside yours.

PANORAMA

PROP Accountability Agreement

Name _____ Date _____

Time Period: From _____ to _____

During this period, I will pursue the following priority, roles, objectives, and partners.

PRIORITY STATEMENT

ROLES

OBJECTIVES

PARTNERS

Signature _____

Supervisor _____

Congratulations, you now have a template to work from when you create your first real-life PROP document.

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REFLECT #3

1. In learning about and developing your first Accountability Agreement, what was unclear or difficult about this process? Why? 2. What components were you unable to complete? Why?

The PROP Accountability Agreement provides a good means of accountability because it is not long and involved (clear and simple), allows you to quantify roles and objectives (measurable), can be easily changed to fit a particular situation or stage of service (adaptable), and covers structural, strategic, and spiritual arenas (comprehensive). However, like any tool, it is useful if only it is handled properly.

DEVELOPING A PROP ACCOUNTABILITY AGREEMENT

The process of developing a draft PROP Accountability Agreement is almost as important as the final document. Keep the following in mind as you develop and pursue your PROP.

1. **Work as a Team.** You are creating your PROP in conjunction with others. Therefore, there must be good dialogue and discussion with those who supervise and coordinate the effort of your church and/or organization.
2. **Be Realistic.** The period of accountability is only six months (unless otherwise negotiated). Therefore, roles and objectives need to be realistic and measurable for that period of time.
3. **Be Reasonable.** It is always better to project less than you actually do. It can be debilitating to propose too much and continually come up short. Remember that your document will be revised in six months and you can always adjust expectations upwards.
4. **Be Committed.** No matter how good the means of accountability might be, its success in providing good accountability is dependent upon those involved. All parties must be convinced of the need for accountability and committed to the process.
5. **Seek Liberty.** Try not to view the PROP as a master for whom you must labor. You are not its slave. It is your means to a productive end. If you can use it as a tool that refines your intentions, frees you from extraneous activities, distractions, and inappropriate obligations, then it can give you the liberty to succeed.

REFLECT #4

What else do you feel needs to be considered as one develops a PROP Accountability Agreement?

PRINCIPLES

The following are the key principles highlighted in this lesson that you might apply as you seek means of accountability:

- Accountability does not just happen. It has to be facilitated by good means.
- Good means of accountability should be simple, shared, measurable, comprehensive, and adaptable.

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- The PROP Accountability Agreement is a good means of accountability, but like any means, it depends upon how it is used and the commitment of those involved.
 - Accountability and means of accountability is a shared experience between people committed to the same vision.
-

LEARNING ACTIVITIES ~ BEFORE YOU GO

If we wish to live in right relationship with others and give witness to Christ cross-culturally, we must be accountable. As you have developed your PROP for the next six months, seek to live by it. Below are some learning activities that may help you in doing this.

Review

If your PROP is developed and stuffed into the back of your Bible or into a drawer and forgotten, then it cannot serve you. Establish a time during the week when you review your PROP from top to bottom, so that these commitments are renewed in your mind and heart.

Write out your plan for regular review **in your PROP document**.

Encouragement

If I know that someone is going to ask me about my life commitments, then I am more likely to work at keeping them. Covenant with a friend to meet once a week in order to talk through your PROP. You and your friend can talk about what is not working for you, where you are having difficulty, or what needs to be changed. Before concluding, pray for each other. Name below the person you might meet with on a regular basis.

Synergy

During this initial six-month cycle, think about how you might widen your circle of partners. Who else might you work with in order to accomplish your roles and objectives? Begin by brainstorming about possible partners that are not currently in your PROP.

Resolve

After six months you will review your PROP with someone in order to continue to be accountable. This may be your facilitator, pastor, supervisor, Mission Sending Council, or someone else. Resolve to make this happen and to be open and transparent in this meeting.

Jim and Cheryl ...

How might Jim and Cheryl's story have been different if they had developed a clear and shared vision prior to their departure? How different might Steve's visit have been if roles, objectives, and partners had been determined beforehand? The development of a PROP Accountability Agreement puts everyone on the same page, sets expectations, and provides an appropriate and useful means for accountability. Hopefully, the end results are people who are free to serve, who are responsible witnesses, and who practice accountability that is just and liberating

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR *ACCOUNTABILITY AND REPORTING*

Perman, Matt. *What's Best Next: How the Gospel Transforms the Way You Get Things Done*. Zondervan, 2016.

Challies, Tim. *Do More Better*. Cruciform Press, 2015.

AUTHOR

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