

MISSION FIELD OBJECTIVES



Accountability

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

“For a man’s ways are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ponders all his paths. The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin. He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray.” Proverbs 5:21-23

“Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.” Proverbs 9:8-9

“Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed.” Proverbs 15:22

“Before destruction a man’s heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor.” Proverbs 18:12

QUOTES

“Proximity, frequency of direct contact with one another, mutually supportive relationships, sharing of resources, struggling and growing together in the faith – these characteristics of a Christian community define its shape. The people of God must have a visible, tangible, experienceable shape.... It is essential to the *missio Dei*. The witness to God’s loving and saving work in history is through the people God calls and sets apart for this mission. Every mission community is a historical witness to the work of God being carried out... This is what the Holy Spirit does: it forms mission communities so that the gospel may be incarnated in particular places, to be the witness to Jesus Christ.” Darrell Guder¹

“In the Christian life, the individual disciple and the body of Jesus belong inseparably together.”...“Everything the disciple does is part of the common life of the Church of which he is a member.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer²

“Within Christian community, people unlearn old patterns and learn new ways of living

MISSION FIELD OBJECTIVES

which reveal the love and power of God in Jesus Christ. Christianity is ‘a cultivating process that produces people in a particular way.’” Inagrace T. Dietterich³

“The more genuine and the deeper our community becomes, the more will everything else between us recede, the more clearly and purely will Jesus Christ and his work become the one and only thing that is vital between us. We have one another only through Christ, but through Christ, we do have one another, wholly, and for all eternity.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

“There is no compartmentalization of the faith, no realm, no sphere, no business, no politic in which the lordship of Christ will be excluded. We either make Him Lord of all lords, or we deny Him as Lord of any.” Lee Camp⁴

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- understand the need for accountability in their life and work,
- explain the various types of accountability necessary,
- state the goals of accountability,
- identify the pitfalls in accountability,
- and develop a transparent life...in order to stay faithful in their life commitments and witness to Christ.

For a person to be a successful cross-cultural witness, accountability is absolutely necessary. It is not an optional activity or a luxury – it is a necessity. Accountability is one of the most important components for cross-cultural witness, and at the same time, it is one of the most difficult pieces to implement in our lives and ministries. While full of possibilities for help and encouragement, it is also fraught with the possibility of misunderstanding and abuse. The hope of this session is that you will gain the kind of understanding and means in order that accountability is good and productive.

While this session is addressed to the candidate, it is acknowledged that accountability takes two or more people. In order for accountability to function as it should, everyone involved must have the same understanding of the purpose, processes, and pitfalls of accountability. Thus, the foundational lessons and principles of lesson need to be discovered by those who supervise, as well as those being supervised.

ACCOUNTABILITY ASSESSMENT

At the outset of this session, we want to help you assess your attitude toward accountability. This will hopefully provide information and perspective that will aid you as you move through the session. The aim is to gauge your level of accountability and your openness to be accountable to another person.

On a scale of 0 to 5, respond to the following statements. The assessment will be more helpful

PANORAMA

if you will respond according to how you really feel and not according to how you perceive you should respond or according to how you think others want you to respond.

- 0 – I **oppose** this statement as a matter of personal opinion or conviction
 - 1 – I **disagree** with this statement
 - 2 – I **mildly agree** with this statement
 - 3 – I **agree** with this statement
 - 4 – I **strongly agree** with this statement
 - 5 – I find the statement to be **true in my life practice**
-

Personal Accountability Assessment

- _ 1. I want another person to know about most of the personal areas of my life.
- _ 2. I regularly go to others for advice and guidance.
- _ 3. I want to be in a mentoring relationship with another person.
- _ 4. I work best in a team situation where there is mutual responsibility and shared credit for success.
- _ 5. I need others to assess me in order to understand my weaknesses and strengths.
- _ 6. I am not offended when others point out my weaknesses or confront me on a particular issue.
- _ 7. I want to be accountable in the area of my finances.
- _ 8. I want a supervisor to ask me questions about work objectives.
- _ 9. I want a supervisor to ask me questions about my prayer life and Bible reading.
- _ 10. If accountability is to be real and effective, it must be regular and scheduled, tangible and measurable.

___Total

Your total should give you some indication of your level of accountability and your openness to be accountable to others.

Where do you fit in the ranges below?

- 0-10 Resistant to be accountable
- 11-19 Low level of accountability and not open to being accountable
- 20-29 Reasonable level of accountability and open to being accountable to others
- 30-39 High level of accountability, at least in concept and also at some level of practice
- 40-50 High level of accountability in concept and practice

REFLECT #1

1. What is your attitude toward the practice of accountability? Do you find this topic to be offensive, confusing, or exciting?
2. What does your score on the Accountability Assessment tell you about yourself?
3. What are the factors in your life that make you resistant to being accountable/open to being accountable?

MISSION FIELD OBJECTIVES

A TALE OF TWO DITCHES

It is difficult to drive on some of the older West Texas roads. While in some cases this is because there are potholes, or because the shoulder of the road is coming apart, it is also difficult to drive on these roads because of the way they were constructed. Older roads, like Highway 80 or Route 66, were built with a ‘crown’ in the middle. This means that the center of the road is higher than its edges.

The reason these roads are designed with a high center is to cause water to run off the road rather than collect and stand. While most of the time West Texas is hot and dry, there are the seasonal torrential downpours that cause problems for the roads. West Texas is flat and water does not have anywhere to go, so it collects and pools in the middle of a flat road. What looks like a level and dry road can suddenly be a shallow lake that causes the car and its driver to lose control. In order to solve this seasonal problem, engineers designed the roads so water would run down from the center.

However, a solution for the water problem causes a small difficulty for dry weather drivers. Because the center is higher than the edges, the driver must ‘work’ to keep their vehicle on the road. The higher center can cause the vehicle to move to the shoulder and thus into the ditch. And over-correcting can cause the vehicle to go into the opposite ditch. So, driving can become a constant battle to “maintain the middle” and not move to one ditch or the other.

The attention that one must give to driving on a West Texas highway illustrates an important challenge that lies at the heart of accountability. With accountability, there are two ditches that must be avoided. On one side is the ditch of **Limits**. In this ditch, rules and regulations are clearly stated and the expectation is that they are to be rigidly followed. Limits become boundaries that cannot be crossed without permission. They are a form of enforcement and control. Anything

*WITH ACCOUNTABILITY, THERE ARE
TWO DITCHES THAT MUST BE
AVOIDED.*

beyond the stated Limits must be approved. Those who find themselves in this ditch may feel as though they live in a straight-jacket of rules, reports, regulations, and boundaries. While Limits might be tolerable when in close proximity to the one(s) who can give approval, it can become intolerable when living half-a-world away. The one being supervised does not feel they can veer to the left or to the right from a prescribed path for fear of being reprimanded.

On the other side of the road is **License**. In this ditch, each person decides what is right for their situation without oversight or input from anyone. The individual is the judge of where the boundaries lie, or if they are to be maintained. This person does whatever he or she determines to be right with little or few checks or balances. There is minimal planning and certainly no approval.

Both ditches, Limits, and License, are dangerous and must be avoided in order to maintain balanced and reasonable accountability in the context of cross-cultural ministry. The key is to avoid the ditches and live in a balance between Limits and License. One avoids these ditches by working to hold a middle course – maintaining the middle. And yet, maintaining the middle is not automatic or natural but is done with intentionality and effort.

REFLECT #2

1. Describe the two ditches, Limits, and License.
2. What are the dangers of the extremes of each?
3. Do you find yourself operating at one of the extremes more than the other?
4. Where does the analogy between West Texas highways and accountability breakdown or does not work?

While you may find yourself operating currently at one extreme more than the other, the key is to find balance between the extremes appropriate for your current stage and your place in life. There must be limits to what any of us is allowed to do and, at the same time, there must be a measure of license. Finding the balance between these is dynamic and must be a negotiated process that is ongoing and based on relationship. What this means is that accountability is dynamic or fluid.

An appropriate balance will not always look the same. For example, in the early days of missions deployment, accountability might be tilted toward Limits.



A tilt toward Limits might be justified and necessary because of a person's lack of experience, need for tangible objectives (such as levels of language acquisition), and desire for assistance and oversight. And yet, while there is a measure of License, accountability is weighted toward restrictions and oversight. It is not completely in the ditch of Limits. There is a measure of License.

At a later point in deployment, there could be an adjustment toward License. Because certain objectives have been successfully met in the arenas of language and work, and proficiency in local relationships has been demonstrated, or just because of the tenure of experience, more freedom and less restriction are granted. Limits do not disappear, but the tilt is toward less oversight.



It is obvious that the chief factor in a shift between Limits and License, in either direction, is trust. If things have happened to violate trust, such as neglect in pursuing agreed upon objectives, a resistance to be open and honest about struggles and shortcomings, or violation of confidentiality, then the one who supervises the cross-cultural worker will tilt hard toward Limits. When trust is absent, controls and boundaries must be in place. On the other hand, if trust is high, the tendency will be to tilt toward License.

Another factor in the shift between Limits and License is experience. When one is new to a language, still establishing relationships, and just beginning work objectives, more guidance and oversight are needed. Once experience is gained, there is more License.

To live at either extreme, Limits or License, is neither healthy nor wise. While all of us need Limits, we also need License. When the balance between the two is appropriate and right, the result is Liberty. The goal is that the right measure of Limits is in place, as well as License so

MISSION FIELD OBJECTIVES

that the cross-cultural witness is at Liberty to succeed. Either too many Limits or too much License is a recipe for failure. Likewise, too few Limits or too little License will in the same way cause failure. Liberty occurs in the dynamic balance between the extremes.

Limits ↔ **Liberty** ↔ **License**

While the popular understanding of Liberty is that one is free from all restrictions and controls, this is not true Liberty. The truth is that we all live within the boundaries of laws and the reality of what is financially and physically possible. None of us are free from all restrictions and controls. Limits are part of life. We must see Liberty as an appropriate and facilitating balance between Limits and License. When the balance between Limits and License is appropriate, Liberty will mean that we are free from attitudes, blind spots, restrictive thinking, and sinful behavior that will destroy our lives and ruin our witness. And at the same time, Liberty offers the benefit of counsel, shared responsibility, burden sharing, guidance, and love that fosters personal and professional community and success. Liberty means that I am free to succeed in those things that God has called me to be and do.

Working against this kind of balanced accountability is the notion that Liberty is individual freedom to do what I want, whenever I want, and with little or no regard for anyone else. This kind of individualism is a ditch that does not lead to freedom or liberty, but to isolation and alienation. Isolated and alienated from others, we find ourselves without the kind of support and help that we need. Scripture calls us to a different kind of existence. It calls us to community. And it is in community that life transformation takes place.

REFLECT #3

Read the following passages and summarize their teaching on the need for community.

Acts 4:32-35

Romans 12:3-8

1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1

2 Timothy 1:18

THE THREE LEGS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

A simple description of accountability is that we are answerable to and encouraged by someone rather than left to ourselves. We are not the sole judge of what is right and wrong; nor do we have the lone view of reality. And we are not allowed to flounder on our own. Implicit in the concept of accountability is the assumption that we need others and others need us. At the heart of accountability is the recognition of the communal nature of life and ministry. To resist accountability is to say, “*I do not need others and others do not need me.*” To avoid being accountable is to say, “*I can do life and ministry alone.*”

While there are many areas in which one could be accountable within the realms of their life and ministry, we feel that for the life and witness of a cross-cultural witness, accountability is crucial in the following areas: Structural, Strategic, and Spiritual. These functions are like the legs of a three-legged stool. Each leg needs to be of the same length and strength if the stool is to work properly. If one leg is too short or poorly constructed, the stool will wobble or even

collapse. In the same way, in order for accountability to be strong, it should include structural, strategic, and spiritual areas.

While we might agree with the idea that we must be answerable to someone rather than left to ourselves, we may insist that accountability as all-encompassing to include structural, strategic, and spiritual areas is going too far. We might ask, "*Is accountability this comprehensive or pervasive really necessary?*" Well, let's look at what each of these areas include.

Structural

Accountability in the area of structure includes reports related to finances, the maintenance of visas, attendance at required meetings, and scheduled contact with supervisor. In order for life and ministry to operate as it should, proper structure must be in place and maintained. The same kind of oversight would be in place if we worked as a barista at Starbucks or as an engineer for the City of Arlington.

Accountability in the area of strategy includes plans for witness, efforts toward church planting, participation in ministry activities, and the implementation of projects. These are the reasons for being in a cross-cultural situation. Because these are essential to our witness to Christ, guidance and oversight are necessary in order to ensure they are done and done well.

Spiritual

Accountability in the area of spirituality includes all that is necessary for one's walk with the Lord. While this may be more difficult to measure, there are activities which are indicators of how well we are doing in our walk. For example, how often do we read our Bible, pray, and worship with others? Just as these are important to any believer no matter what they do or where they work (Starbucks or the City of Arlington), they are even more essential for a cross-cultural situation.

Because we are called to the most important activities in this life, it is crucial that we do them with the help of others involved in the same activities. Our calling is to give witness to the Most High God and to live the gospel faithfully before others. Thus, we must be accountable for the way we steward money, our intentions in ministry, and our walk with God.

Counting What is Countable

Accountability is not real or useful if the means of measurement or evaluation are not tangible and effective. Most of us tend to dislike reporting, and thus we dislike reports that make us count or measure activities in our lives. And yet, that which is nebulous or fuzzy is not real accountability. Fuzziness gives us room to hide what we do, our motivation for what we do, and the results of our actions. The reason for resistance to measurable accountability is that we wish to hide failures, and we do not want to think about our weaknesses and character flaws. Tangible, real accountability will include affirmation and encouragement, but it also must include confrontation and dealing with hard issues.

We also chafe at the thought of someone over us as a supervisor. And yet, unless there is someone to whom we actually make reports and who has responsibility to confront us and address issues, we are not accountable. The root words of supervision are 'over' and 'look'. One looks over what we do in order to give oversight and direction. What this means is that we are not alone in life and ministry. Supervision is a commitment of others to mutual responsibility and evaluation. The intended outcome is mutual success.

MISSION FIELD OBJECTIVES

For some of us, our resistance is because we have either seen or experienced poor supervision in which people were emotionally hurt, treated unfairly, or in which success or liberty were not the outcomes. In all likelihood, these supervision agreements either were inadequately negotiated or out of balance.

NEGOTIATING THE RIGHT BALANCE

It is obvious that accountability is a delicate balancing act that requires sensitivity and work by all parties. There is not a single formula or set plan for accountability that will work for every person and every situation. Appropriate accountability requires the complete and active involvement by all parties: the cross-cultural witnesses and those who represent the church. Appropriate accountability must be negotiated in an open and dynamic manner. Such negotiation should include ...

1. **Defining the Relationship** is foundational. Accountability will have a particular emphasis and be at a specific level for the person sent solely by the church. The person will be responsible to the church for accounting of funds and for measuring work objectives. And yet, if a person is commissioned by the church but has responsibility to an on-the-ground ministry organization or a job, then accountability will definitely look different. And the accountability for a person trained, nurtured, and blessed by the church but sent by an agency will be entirely different. Relationship defines the type of accountability, its level, and responsibility.

REFLECT #4

What might the accountability relationship look like for Matt who is sent by his church to give witness to Christ in Tibet, and yet, Matt is self-employed and finances his mission activities via a company he started?

2. **Assessment** provides a benchmark and the framework upon which accountability can be realistically established and measured. Without a formalized means of assessing a person's strengths, weaknesses and areas of concern, it is impossible to negotiate accountability that is constructive and realistic. If strengths and weaknesses are not known and areas of concern are not identified, then these cannot be addressed. It is like buying clothes without trying them on. You may get a shirt that is way too tight or pants that you cannot keep up. For accountability to serve the person and the mission, it needs to "fit" the person. Without assessment, the person is not known.

3. **Reasonable Objectives** form the heart of accountability. While some objectives may sound noble, holy, or seem to be the right things to do, they always need to be questioned as to whether they are reasonable and appropriate. In setting objectives, the following questions may be of help in deciding if they are reasonable or not:

- 1) Is the objective too large? If the objective is too large and grand, we can be overwhelmed by it. A reasonable objective needs to be attainable.
- 2) Can the objective be achieved within a short amount of time? If the end date for an objective is too far in the future, we can lose sight of it.
- 3) Can the objective be measured? How can we know if we have actually accomplished an objective if it is immeasurable or nebulous?

4) Does the objective fit the vision? While an objective may sound nice or even noble, it may not contribute toward fulfilling the overall vision.

4. **Full-orbed Accountability** means that there is a healthy balance between structural, strategic, and spiritual accountability. One must continually ask – Are each of these being dealt with adequately?

REFLECT #5

1. If through an assessment process it is discovered that Matt has strength in areas of forming relationships and communication of ideas but has a tendency not to complete tasks or deal with conflict, what kind of elements need to be part of his accountability?
2. If Matt is at the outset of his deployment, what might be some examples of reasonable and appropriate objectives?
3. What might be some unreasonable objectives?
4. What objectives would be immeasurable or nebulous?
5. What might be some of the consequences of holding Matt accountable in structural and strategic areas and not the spiritual?
6. Or what if accountability is only about Matt's prayer life, Bible reading, and walk with God and not his finances or work?

WHAT CAUSES ACCOUNTABILITY TO VEER INTO A DITCH?

Accountability efforts can and do go wrong. Most of us can tell stories of how misunderstandings, broken relationships, and manipulation resulted from an accountability arrangement. Usually there are specific reasons why it goes wrong. Below are some of the causes of unhealthy accountability.

1. **Improper Balance of Limits and License**

If the balance between Limits and License is improper or inappropriate for the person, the particular time, or the situation, then accountability will not be what is needed at the time. The hard work of accountability is the continual evaluation and recalibration of the balance between these extremes. Without diligence and attention, accountability can become unbalanced.

2. **Failure to Communicate**

Of course, proper balance requires communication on the part of all parties. If one is doing all the talking and the other is silent or does not respond, then information is only going in one direction and assumptions will be made. In most cases of poor communication, needs are not conveyed, expectations are not explained, and evaluations are based on poor data. Communication is like a circle – talk and response travel the full distance in order to complete the circle. Poor communication means the circle is incomplete – broken. When communication is poor, misunderstandings are sure to result.

3. **Unstated Expectations**

When activities, attitudes, or objectives are expected but not actually stated, then expectations cannot be met. What is thought or assumed must be stated, or it is not possible for either party to affirm their willingness to commit to the activity, attitude, or objective – to live up to the expectation. No one can live up to expectations that are not clearly communicated.

MISSION FIELD OBJECTIVES

REFLECT #6

1. Joyce is at the beginning of her time in Tanzania. She has no overseas experience, has never learned a language, and is working as part of a team that is young and inexperienced as well. If accountability is tilted toward License (very little oversight, guidance, or structure), in what ways might those who supervise her not be able to help in her successful transition?
2. Because Joyce is in Tanzania and lives in the countryside, communication is difficult. There is no internet and she has to book a phone call from a local phone shop. In addition to these physical difficulties, Joyce is shy and introverted. So, when she is able to talk to her supervisor, she is not forthcoming with information but has to be asked about everything. What might go wrong with accountability between Joyce and her supervisor?
3. When Joyce's supervisor visited Tanzania, she saw a great need among orphans. In conversations with Joyce, the supervisor talked about orphans in Tanzania. Often in prayer times, she would pray for orphans. However, when they worked on Joyce's roles and objectives no mention was made of orphans. During Joyce's first evaluation, her supervisor asked why she was not doing anything to minister to the obvious need among orphans in her city. What can Joyce do at this point in order to salvage the accountability relationship?

4. Laziness and Neglect

Accountability is work! All parties must be committed to diligence in communication, staying with an agreed upon schedule, talking through issues and misunderstandings, evaluating the balance between Limits and License, and doing what is necessary in order to be trustworthy and true in the relationship. One should be very careful about saying that they will supervise or be supervised. Laziness and neglect can turn a simple 'yes' into a nightmare. And yet, hard work and attention can produce much for the kingdom.

5. Mistrust

In my estimation, the number one reason that accountability fails is because one or both parties do not trust the motives, intent, or commitment of the other. Trust is not automatic and cannot be assumed. It must be developed and maintained. Being designated as a supervisor gives a person opportunity to develop trust, but he or she should not automatically assume trust. They must develop the kind of trust that will weather misunderstandings, hardships, and confrontations. And usually, this kind of trust comes with time. Once there are misunderstandings and rocky times, both parties must by faith and with commitment to the process and each other work to maintain or in some cases re-establish trust.

REFLECT #7

1. Joyce and her supervisor work hard to develop agreed-upon roles and objectives, a schedule for accountability, a reliable way to communicate, and a plan to revisit and evaluate every part of the accountability relationship. What can you say about the prospects of Joyce and her supervisor making accountability work?
2. Five years into the accountability relationship, Joyce says something to a colleague that communicates that her supervisor's motives in a specific action are impure and possibly self-motivated. What is said gets back to her supervisor. While hurt by the comment, she trusts that this is not what Joyce meant or that Joyce was misquoted. Instead of letting the reported comment cause a break in the relationship or create ill-will, the supervisor goes directly to Joyce and asks about it. It turns out that the comment was taken out of context and totally misconstrued by the colleague.
3. On the other hand, what if Joyce had actually said the things being reported? What could be done to restore trust?
4. What else might cause accountability between Joyce and her supervisor to go awry or to become unhealthy?

THE GOAL OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability is not an end in itself. When it does become the end, there is a good chance that pride or self-righteousness has crept in. We can do all the right things, live an upright life

and think we have reason to brag about how much better we are than someone else. Unless the goals of accountability are clearly defined and we are continually reminded that accountability is not an end in itself, we can find ourselves becoming pharisaical in our attitude.

The goal of accountability is faithful living and witness. Accountability is simply a means to these ends, and thus, it is to be measured by these ends. You and I should continually ask, *“As a result of what I do in being accountable to another person, will I live a more faithful life?”* Does accountability lead me to the kind of living and openness that gives witness to the power of Jesus in and through my life?

Witness is more than the words we preach or the testimony we give. It exists in the ways in which we act in the various areas of our lives. If we lie to others, steal from our employer, mistreat our spouse, gossip, slander, covet another person’s car or iPod, or make a joke at another person’s expense, then we give testimony that the power of God is not sufficient to change a life. Accountability is the means by which we are confronted and our lives transformed so that our actions and attitudes will match our words. This does not mean that we must be perfect in order to be witnesses. However, our lives must be pointed in a humble and transparent way toward becoming more Christ-like in our words and actions.

Pursue Transparency

Accountability calls us to shift from secrecy to transparency. In order to maintain an image of success, spirituality, or self-sufficiency, we sometimes cover up the unpleasant, embarrassing, and dirty stuff of our lives. And yet, it is only in revealing these things that we are able to deal with attitudes, habits, and activities that hamper our witness. Usually, it is through situations or events that we do not choose when the stuff that we are hiding actually comes out. Someone crashes into our car and suddenly our dirty stuff explodes. Anger that we did not even know was there just appears. At a time when we should demonstrate love and forgiveness, we are yelling at a stranger. Or someone we know slanders us, and we strike back with a dose of gossip. The truth is that anger and gossip were already there, lurking inside of us. The car wreck and slander brought what was already there to the surface. When we decide to be accountable to others, we allow them to really see us and help us deal with our stuff.

CREATING AND MAINTAINING TRANSPARENCY

There is no formula for living an open and vulnerable life, but there are some attitudes and practices that can prompt a transparent life and accountability with others.

1. **Confessional Prayer.** We can try to hide even in our prayers. An open and vulnerable life begins with being transparent with the One who already knows who we are and the ways in which we have failed, yet still loves and accepts us. He certainly does not tolerate some of our attitudes and sinful behavior and thus holds us accountable, but He still listens to our confession and is ready to start over. Transparency begins with God.
2. **Confess to Spouse or Best Friend.** There should be someone in our lives who knows our burdens, disappointments, fears, and sins. We are called upon to confess our sins one to another; to bear one another’s burdens.
3. **Embrace Failures.** If we can see failure as the opportunity to be confronted by our

MISSION FIELD OBJECTIVES

weaknesses and negligence, failure can be a gift. Failure can be the opportunity to become aware of and act on the issues of our lives. If we bury or hide our failures, then the issues involved with the failure are buried as well.

4. **Seek Open Friendships.** True friendship promotes an open and transparent life. If we are open and transparent with a Christian or even a Muslim friend, sharing our struggles, desires, and joys, our friend will know intimately the power of God to transform, fulfill, and love.

Accountability begins with a desire to be transformed. It must begin with the acknowledgment that there are attitudes, habits, and actions in our lives that hamper faithful living and witness.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

This session ends with an opportunity for you to write a statement of your desire to be accountable through a transparent and open life to another person. Rather than just being a requirement for the missionary vocation or calling, accountability has to be a life choice.

With knowledge of the amount of work and the level of transparency that accountability requires, what can you state as your intent?

PRINCIPLES

The following are the key principles highlighted in this session that you might apply as you seek to be accountable:

- Accountability is a constantly negotiated balance between Limits and License.
- Balanced accountability should lead to Liberty, true Liberty.
- Accountability should be negotiated, never assumed.
- Comprehensive accountability will include the structural, strategic and spiritual arenas of life.
- Faithful living and witness are the goals of accountability, transparency is the means.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES ~ BEFORE YOU GO

If we wish to live cross-culturally and give witness to Christ, we must live accountable lives. Rather than a tool of missions we employ, accountability is a life choice we choose. The activities below should help in choosing to be accountable and fulfilling the desire to live an open and transparent life.

Decision

Like many disciplines of life, we must make prior decision about what we will do about accountability. Before you venture into cross-cultural witness, decide that you will live a life

PANORAMA

that is accountable to others. If accountability is only an option or an open issue, then our tendency will be to move toward the easiest path or to hide from others.

Life on Life

Practicing accountability trains a person in how to live an accountable life. Initiate steps now to institute accountability practices so that you learn how best to live an accountable life. Seek someone who is older and more mature in the faith and ask them to hold you accountable in your walk with the Lord. Establish regular times for the two of you to meet and talk about the disciplines of life.

Formation

Each practice of openness and transparency helps to form life habits of openness and transparency. Look for small steps of accountability, realizing that these collectively shape the whole of your life. Name one practice that you can do this week to promote openness and transparency.

Shared Commitment

Sharing life commitments with another person helps to solidify or to make real what we have thought about and purposed to do. Share with another person what you have discovered about yourself or what you have decided to do differently in the area of accountability. Ask them to pray for you as you take new steps toward being transformed.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR *MISSION FIELD OBJECTIVES*

The following books are good places to begin an investigation of mentoring and accountability that will foster successful and productive cross-cultural witness.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Life Together*. New York: Harper Press, 1954.

This book is a classic discussion of community and discipleship taken from its actual practice at an underground seminary in Nazi Germany. 122 pages.

Foster, Richard J. *Celebration of Discipline*. New York: Harper Press, 1978.

Foster discusses the place of the disciplines of the Christian faith in a fresh and stimulating way. Among the disciplines discussed, the disciplines of guidance and submission speak to the topic of accountability. 171 pages.

Bellah, Robert N., et al. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. New York: Harper and Row, 1986.

This classic work on the development of individualism in American life provides background understanding as to why alienation has increased and community has decreased.

MISSION FIELD OBJECTIVES

NOTES

¹Darrell Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 145-6.

²Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 254, 255.

³Inagrace T. Dietterich, *Cultivating Missional Communities* (Wipf & Stock), 4.

⁴Lee Camp, *Mere Discipleship: Radical Christianity in a Rebellious World* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2003), 23.

AUTHOR

Dr. Michael W. Stroope is Associate Professor of Christian Missions and M.C. Shook Chair of Missions at George W. Truett Theological Seminary in Waco, Texas. Mike doesn't just talk mission – he has lived it literally all over the globe. After years of service through the IMB, Mike set out on a journey to help the Church realize her potential in taking the gospel to all nations. Mike serves as a catalyst to movements such as Restore Hope around the world through his relationships with passionate missional thinkers.

Mission Field Objectives. Copyright © 2008 by Michael Stroope. All rights reserved. Published with author's permission by Restore Hope 2008.