

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ hold each other accountable.

SCRIPTURE

GALATIANS 2:11-14; MATTHEW 18:15-17

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

The beginning of Matthew 18 opens with Jesus and his disciples making their way to Capernaum (Mark 9:33). As tends to happen on most road trips, topics that don't typically get brought up bubble their way to the top of the conversation. In this case, the disciples argued about which one of them was the greatest. If you had an open and honest discussion about this same topic with your best friends, what are the chances someone will eventually say something hurtful? In today's passage, Jesus told his followers what to do when someone sins against them. This guide to accountability is designed to strengthen our faith journey and our community of faith as a whole.

Check out the **Teacher Prep Video** for this lesson: <https://vimeo.com/816577843>



FACILITATOR NOTE: We've giving you a lot of teaching material. Don't feel like you should cover everything here. You know your group better than anyone. Choose the material that will best fit your students and skip over the rest.

OPENING

PRAYER

1-2 minutes

Start your small group by asking the Lord to bless your discussion and time together.
OPTIONAL: Give students an opportunity to lead the prayer.

OPENING QUESTIONS

3-5 minutes

- How was the week? What's the best thing that's happened? Anything major going on?
- How would you define a "best friend?" Who is your best friend?



EXPLORE

EXPLORE GOD'S WORD

3-5 minutes

One of the ways we are "Better Together" is because we can and should hold each other accountable. This series so far has touched on the idea that others can see what we can't see, but it goes deeper than that. *Disciples of Christ hold each other accountable.* That accountability is meant to help us grow closer to God and to each other.

Read Galatians 2:11–14 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- **How would you define the word “hypocrite”?**
Give a few of your students time to answer before you so your answer isn’t copied. Feel free to look up a dictionary definition.
- **How would you define the difference between accountability and judgment?**
Answers will vary, but accountability is meant to be helpful, while judgment, most of the time, is meant to be hurtful. Judgment is not our job with each other or the world.
- **Why do we need to hold each other accountable?**
We are all chasing the same goal, to be more like Jesus. But no one is perfect, so we all need help.



Say something like: Paul was trying to get everyone to see the hypocrisy in their actions and their need to ask hard questions and hold each other accountable. We need a “Paul” in our lives to do the same.

Read Matthew 18:15–17 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- **Why do you think having 2–3 witnesses matters?**
It helps avoid the “he said, she said” situations, provides more legitimacy to the issue, and allows for more wisdom to be shared. It is also referencing Old Testament law, something the original listeners would have known (Deut. 19:15)..
- **If someone was going to have a hard conversation with you, how would you want them to do it?**
Answers will vary but try to help students think about others through their lens. This can help prepare them to be effective in holding others accountable.
- **Why is it important to assume that those holding you accountable want the best for you?**
Help your students understand that accountability is about supporting each other and remembering we are chasing the same goal. Assuming people want the best for us helps us listen to what they have to say and respond with humility..
- **How can we remind ourselves not to get defensive or combative in hard conversations?**
Answers will vary. Share some of your strategies or struggles with being told difficult truths. Prayer is always helpful in these situations!
- **Who in your life has permission to ask you the hard questions? Why them?**
Answers will vary. Encourage students to seek out a parent, trusted friend, or mentor if they don’t currently have someone who fills this role in their life. This is also a chance to be personal with your students and share about those who hold you accountable.



Say something like: Jesus knows that accountability should be part of the believer’s life, but he also knows we’ll struggle with it. That’s why he encourages us to work together in a faith community to hold people accountable. Accountability matters, but we need to invite people into the process for the best results. We need to build relationships with people we trust and know have our best intentions in mind.



CONNECT & APPLY

CONNECTION

5-7 minutes

Show your students how Scripture connects to their lives: Use the example below OR share a personal story about someone who told you something you needed to hear even when you didn't want to hear it.



Example: Amanda was going through a lot at home. Her parents were fighting all the time, she wasn't getting along with her stepmom, and it was just a daily drama. One night, Amanda was texting her friend and looking for support. But little did Amanda know that her friend was sharing everything with the other people in the room.

Amanda was pouring out her heart, and she thought it was a private conversation. The next day at school, Amanda bumped into a classmate who commented on how Amanda and her stepmom weren't getting along. Amanda was furious because she had only told one person.

But instead of confronting that person and holding them accountable, Amanda kept her hurt and pain to herself. She distanced herself from her friend and others and grew angrier and angrier over time. Amanda knew she should hold her friend accountable but was too afraid to be hurt again.

- When have you had a challenging conversation with someone? How did it go?

Answers will vary. Be sure to encourage and give guidance to the answers of everyone who shares.

- Why is it so hard to have those tough conversations?

Answers will vary, but help students recognize it's okay for some conversations to be tough. Even if there are awkward, scary, or uncomfortable moments, tough conversations are important and can be productive and encouraging for everyone involved.

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

2-3 minutes

Disciples of Christ hold each other accountable.

Use the Mark of a Disciple to reinforce the lesson and challenge students to apply it to their lives.

APPLY IT

5-10 minutes

Think of someone you need to have a hard conversation with but have been putting it off because of fear or worry about how it will go. How can you model what Jesus taught in Matthew 18?



Be specific:

- What are you going to do?
- When are you going to do it?
- Is there someone who can keep you accountable?



FACILITATOR NOTE: Allow students who are comfortable to share their plans for application. This may encourage or spark ideas for other students, plus add a level of accountability.



CLOSING**PRAYER**

2-3 minutes

Take time to let your students pray for each other's applications in the upcoming weeks. Spend time praying that your students will seek other people who can hold them accountable and that they will receive that accountability well and have the opportunity to do the same for others..

Write down any prayer requests mentioned and ask your students about them at your next meeting.

MEMORY VERSE

Send the memory verse graphic included in your download to your students later this week to keep the conversation going.

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother."

Matthew 18:15 (ESV)

NOTES

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright ©2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. May not copy or download more than 500 consecutive verses of the ESV Bible or more than one half of any book of the ESV Bible.

Any reference within this piece to Internet addresses of websites not under the administration of LeaderTreks is not to be taken as an endorsement of these websites by LeaderTreks; neither does LeaderTreks vouch for their content.

