

Accountability – Part 1

I want to share with you about accountability and its importance in building character and leadership competency. Accountability is defined as “The obligation of an individual or organization to account for its activities, accept responsibility for them, and to disclose the results in a transparent manner. It also includes the responsibility for money or other entrusted property.”

In a recent research conducted by a business growth consulting firm, one of the issues leaders raised was low level of accountability on the part of employees. Many individuals nowadays find someone or something external to themselves as the reason or excuse for their failures. In some instances they get away with it even in the law courts. This is not a generational or employee issue as human beings over time have struggled with this issue.

You may be familiar with the David and Bathsheba story (2Sam. 11 & 12). Many leaders like David have standards that others should strive for or attain but they themselves do not even realize when they fall below the standards because they are not accountable to anyone for what they do. There was no one around David to hold him accountable for sleeping with Bathsheba, putting Uriah’s life in grave danger that led to Uriah’s death and taking Bathsheba as wife. This is similar to a leader today taking advantage of his/her position to engage in sexual or abusive (physical or emotional) relationship with direct reports or other employees, asking employees to take on roles that they are not suited for without required support or will put their careers in danger, or terminating their appointments/making the environment so toxic/hostile that the targeted individual has no option than to resign.

The reason why David’s situation with Bathsheba lasted that long before Prophet Nathan came into the scene is because there was no mechanism for him to be checked. To avoid this kind of situation, a leader needs to apply the same standard that she applies to others to herself. A leader needs to develop a structure to receive honest feedback from others around her/him.

Without this honest feedback structure, failure in form of crisis of character and leadership is close as no one is perfect. Wise people learn from others’ mistakes instead of by their own experience. Whatever leadership level you are, please find someone to whom you will be accountable for what you do in your private and professional life. As you faithfully do this you will see your level of accountability rising and you may be in a position to help others to do the same.