

4.3.BP(25).Accountable Prayer. 6:45-52

Read Mark 6:45-52.

⁴⁵ Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he **dismissed** the crowd. ⁴⁶ And after he had taken **leave** of them, he went up on **the mountain to pray**. Mark 6:45-46

Background:

As a younger disciple, you have already learned from the Lord Mashiach's example how to draw near to God in "Devotional Prayer." Now, as you mature, the danger is that you *take a page* from natural human development and think that now

that you are older, more mature, stronger, you necessarily become more Self-Reliant and less Parent-Reliant.

The key difference in the spiritual realm compared with this earthly realm is that we never outgrow the Lord God's rightful place as the most important Head and Creator of our lives (the place of honor as God), nor do we replace his authority over all things, including the House of God and our very lives as the Lord (possessor of all authority). As our Lord and God, his role never is vacated by time, age, or history.

So, we look to Jesus Mashiach and how he relates to His Father, Yahweh Elohim, his Lord and God. Consider that the Son of God has known Yahweh Elohim, the Lord God, for an eternity in the "beginning," yet he still presents himself to the Father in humble dependence and worship.

So, let us learn the lesson of how to approach the Lord God and Jesus Mashiach in “Accountable Prayer,” especially after major accomplishments or ministry events or seasons. Do not think that he simply cares about the task being performed. The reality is that the love you share with the Lord God, with your Chief Shepherd, is always of highest value and priority with the Lord.

Mindful of what the Lord has given you and what he has called you to as one of his shepherd disciples, so come before him and “report” all that you have “done” and “taught.” Now, we don’t know the private conversation between the Lord Jesus and his Father in this post-ministry prayer. But, let’s just review the mission of the shepherd and topics which may have come up.

Praying for Sheep:



PROTECT SHEEP



FEED SHEEP



CARE FOR SHEEP



LEAD SHEEP

Praying for the Sheep:

When we recall the role of the shepherd to “call” his own sheep by name and lead them out (John 10:3), for Jesus acknowledges that the people of his flock are those “whom you gave me out of the world” (John 17:6). But, at this point, Jesus as Shepherd has just been ministering to the anonymous crowd.

Perhaps at this point, the Father and the Son are reviewing the time of ministry, and Jesus is hearing from the Father if any of the five thousand men who were fed, in addition to women and children, were among those whom the Father will give to Jesus. As Jesus Mashiach waits on the Father, it is likely that he is presenting this crowd to the Father, that he may draw those he chooses to step up and come to Jesus or perhaps that Jesus might meet them again to call them out.

Likewise, when you encounter the crowds, your time of review may bring people or faces to mind. As you consider them prayerfully, expect the Holy Spirit to guide your mind and your prayer conversation about some names who come to mind. You may discern the Lord's gradual change in their lives. As a shepherd, keep track of even the progress of those in the crowd who have yet to repent and join the flock of the Lord's family.

Case study: knowing your sheep. When praying in the Spirit for those who have yet to come into the Kingdom, be aware of those God puts on your heart and your desires, for Jesus himself called to himself "those whom he desired" (Psalm 37:4). Of course, test your heart and motives. When I was in Japan as a short-term missionary, my teammates joked that I was *called* to attractive Japanese women!

During debriefing times, it was important to discern the Lord's work in the people who were not yet part of the flock, who still needed the good shepherd. I remember one friend, P., a pre-med student who eventually became a psychiatrist. At first, he lived a wildly lawless life of drinking and debauchery as an atheist. But, as the Lord God began to make himself known, P. started to know not just God but his moral Law. As a sign of progress, one night P. had gone back to a hotel room with a stripper he had met. As she was disrobing, he was struck by conviction and fled the room, saying, "this is not right!"

So, shepherding those before they are known fully by the Lord is important as you watch for sins of progress—a growing belief in God, a sense of his Law and a conviction of sin, exposure to the Word of God, and finally, the

Gospel of Jesus, who calls them to faith in himself by repenting.

So, as Jesus surely prayed for these “sheep without a shepherd,” you also should be sure to debrief and discuss the flock before and after meeting them. Pray for:



PROTECT SHEEP

Protection:

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus is reported to see these “sheep without a shepherd” as being “harassed and helpless” (Matthew 9:36), for to be in this land of “darkness” in the “shadow of death” (Isaiah 9:2) is to be under the *trampling boot* of Satan and his malice (9:4-5).

So, to pray for “protection” is to pray that the enemy is kept far from them, and that the Lord may keep the “birds” away that the Word may

start to grow and take root in their lives. Also, in the presence of God, you may be aware of emerging threats to the flock. You may sense a *dark turning* or a creeping *lawlessness* threatening the flock. Pray against this!

Case study: the defiling root of bitterness.

When my ministry partner K and I were training for seminary, we served as interns in a small African-American congregation in the wealthy north suburbs of Chicago. We enjoyed the rich hospitality of that little flock, and we learned to serve as “ministers” in training. Sitting on the stage in front of the choir, we learned that worship can be *felt* and not just *heard*!

One day, a new, *highly skilled* preacher took over the pulpit. His oratorical skills were unsurpassed. But, as K and I continued to serve, as we prayed for the congregation, there were warning signs that emerged. A misuse of the

passage, or private unrepentant behavior. Once, on the phone, I heard the man yelling abusively at his wife. For the sake of the flock, I knew that a “bitter root” of unchecked sin, especially in the life of the pastor, would defile many. When it turned out that he was divorcing his wife, that sin would likely undermine many marriages.

So, I met with him one Saturday and asked him about the possibility that he may have sinned in anyway, to which he replied, “We’re all sinners, why should we repent?” I was forced out of the church, but K stayed to *protect the flock* from within, until another minister replaced this man. But, praying for the flock’s protection means to watch for threats from outside or from within! And, to let the Lord judge his flock in his time.



2. Feeding:

As you may be seeing, the private times of prayer before and after ministry initiatives are necessary both in your personal life as a shepherd and with your team: pre-meeting planning or regular times of intercession, as well as de-briefing meetups right after events are all important to stay in subjection to the Chief Shepherd of the flock, Jesus Mashiach. One of the most fruitful times of accountability, both before and after meeting with the flock, are those times when you discuss with the Lord the Feeding of his flock. Seek his heart about the condition of his flock and what they need. Perhaps recent trials mean they need a diet that is especially encouraging. Or, they are being tested and need to be fortified in certain areas. After the time with the flock, debrief before the

Lord and also with your team. How was the Word received? What did the discussion reveal about the conditions of their hearts? Any signs of *hardness* or “roots of bitterness” that needed to be weeded out?



Caring:

As the Lord calls people from the crowd into the Kingdom community of his flock, and as they are known by name by shepherds, much of their care involves bringing them and their needs to the Lord. In the prayer times of accountability, shepherds tell the Lord of their needs and ask for his care and grace.

When caring for the sheep, you will need to discern the source of many problems and to see both the *requests* that a person may be offering up and the related issues of spiritual growth and

faith, which they are likely ignoring or to which they are blind.

For example, young disciples will invariably focus on their immediate, personal needs. The need for jobs, or new vehicles, or a relationship. So, you as the Shepherd are not necessarily their personal concierge. Rather, your calling first is to watch over their souls (Hebrews 13:17), their health and growth as children of the Kingdom, and their maturation as disciples of the Lord Jesus.

So, as you still assist and carry their physical burdens before the Lord, you are also looking for opportunities for spiritual growth and encouragement.

Often, this discernment comes in the presence of the Lord, as you are discussing a particular need before the Lord.

Case Study: What you really want- caring for needs.

R was frustrated. He had been faithfully been spending time with A, reading the Word of God with her, praying, and serving with her. A. had come to the Lord first, being redeemed from a substance addiction and healed from a broken spine and legs. R was baptized a year later, saved from a similar background. So, R would faithfully shuttle A around and assist her in her various needs. So, their friendship grew.

But now, A. was unavailable in the summer, spending weeks at a time at the family cottage. As I talked with R, I asked him what he felt he needed, and of course, it revolved around A and their relationship. However, I then asked him what the Lord was doing in his life—was his life meant to stop once A was unavailable? He soon realized that God's work went far beyond his

relationship. He remembered his calling to be a disciple and how God gives us the strength to serve others but never makes those we serve the source of our strength. That next week, he started focusing on the needs of some younger disciples—bringing them to the fellowship or meeting them for lunch. Eventually, A. returned from the cottage, but R had learned the lesson of faithfulness—his true need (Matt. 6:33).



LEAD SHEEP

4) Leading:

When you meet with the Lord and wait on him for the direction the flock should proceed, be mindful of two different concerns. As a shepherd who knows your sheep, the Lord may put on your heart the direction he may have for individuals. For example, if a young disciple shows a heart for others and faithfulness in meeting needs, perhaps

the Lord may be calling him to step forward into leadership. You may be the one to “call him or her” into service for the Lord. Or, if a couple may be continually struggling in their communication, the Lord may be *leading* them to take a next step to seek help for their relationship.

Also, the Lord may have plans for the entire group. There may be an open door for ministry or a service to the larger family they may be called to perform. As the leader of your flock, the Lord will often put things on your heart to bring before the group. Or, you may seek the Lord’s will over a certain opportunity that one of the group members brings forward.

In this respect, it is good to report your sense of direction with your shepherding team, for it is good to *test* words from the Lord discuss how to take action.

Factory or Family?

Finally, the fact that Jesus deliberately sought out the Father's presence, sending his disciples away after their successful ministry to the 5000 reveals the "culture" and *identity of the Kingdom*.

The purpose of this ministry event was not simply pragmatic, to achieve a certain result. This task-oriented ethos is not part of the Kingdom identity. The Kingdom's purpose is not simply to accomplish a mission. If this were the case, Jesus and his disciples would have simply concluded the session and moved on to the next task.

Organizations are *results-focused* in this respect, gathering people to fulfill a specific mission and purpose. And, once a task is done, the *workers* have no more obligation to the one who assigned the task, for the job is done.

But, the Kingdom is a Family, not a factory. So, tasks are done with the *never-ending* relationship in sight. A completed task is a gift, a sacrificial work offered to honor the One who assigned it. For the purpose of a family is live as a family, to grow, to progress in maturity together, and to gather the *lost members* who belong in the safety of home.

So, Jesus draws near to the Father to know his pleasure, to hear his commendation, and to talk about their future and the future of the family.

**Factory****Results****Family****Rewarding Relationship**

Focus:

1. Debrief with Lord after Ministry. 6:45.
2. Depart to a place of seclusion). 6:46
3. Deal Graciously with Others: Encourage weaker. 6:47-52

Consider:

As a shepherd, practicing *accountable prayer* does not hold any magical guarantees of change. What accountability represents as the “tip of the iceberg” is the broader *mindset* of the Kingdom of God, which is a *family oneness* we see rooted in the Godhead of Father, Son, and Spirit. For, *accountability* is the evidence of a deeper interdependence and trust shared in our Family Kingdom. Accountability is the opposite of the

default instinct of the flesh, a self-interested independence that will hollow out the unity of the Kingdom family, carving out pockets of self-interest, division, and factions.

As we consider how the Lord Jesus embodied this sense of healthy *accountability*, first modeling it for his disciples and then *living it out* in his gracious interactions with them.

Accountable
prayer for
everything you
do in the
Kingdom family



and a transparent accountability with your partnering shepherds making up your own household of faith shields you from the encroaching of fleshly *self-interested independence of action*, which narrows your world

until there is no one to change you from a course of Self-Interest that will end up ruling your life and pitting you against the Lord's Kingdom interests!

Case Study: Numbing Independence.

In the Bible, it is the height of folly to be so detached that *no one can speak to you*, as was the case with the *worthless* Nabal. But, I've found that leaders who are unaccustomed to accountability follow the same desensitizing path.

For years, our church was led by J, the senior pastor. One might think that his introverted personality kept him from sharing what was on his mind, even with his team of fellow shepherds. As a pastor on his team, I often heard of major decisions when a general announcement was made.

Instead, J. kept a tight circle of those whom he would talk with. Increasingly, the circle became less and less diverse, eventually looking identically like J himself. Of course, when one only listens to voices that could be your own, then one's voice is all that matters.

So, after embarking in a church audit that cast a new five-year vision for the church, J announced that he was resigning and moving back to his home country. No advice or feedback was asked of his fellow pastors nor elders, simply an announcement was made. It turns out, it was more convenient for J to move, having received a job offer from a Bible Belt church where his college-aged children would be studying. Was indeed J called by God? Only God knows. But, without a commitment to accountability, the line between personal self-interest and the calling of God disappears.

1. Debrief with the Lord after Ministry. 6:45.

After Jesus Mashiach finishes ministering to the five thousand men, he takes deliberate steps to present himself to his Father in *accountable prayer*: he sends his disciples ahead of himself by boat to Bethsaida and then he stays to dismiss the crowd (45). Only after he is left alone does Jesus ascend the mountain to pray.

2. Depart to a place of seclusion. 6:46

As we have considered, there are many things that we would expect Jesus to discuss with the Father. And, there are many reasons why “Accountable Prayer” is fundamental to and protective of the Kingdom. Simply, Jesus prays after the conclusion of his ministry, and we should too. Whether as an individual shepherd or with our shepherding team during our *post-ministry* de-briefing, it is good to

present ourselves to the Lord in prayer. To report to him, to seek his input, and to be open to what he is planning next.

If anything, *accountable prayer* gives you a sense of what the Lord thought about what just transpired. Hopefully, you will hear the words, “well done.”

3. Deal Graciously with Others: Encourage weaker. 6:47-52

Spending time resting before your Lord in his great mercy and acceptances will change you. When Jesus concludes his prayer time, he turns to find his disciples and saw them making “painful” progress (48).

Having spent time with his *great father*, Jesus is gracious with his *weak disciples*. Seeing them in their terror, he changes plans to walk past them to their destination. Instead, he stops to encourage

them: “Take heart.. do not be afraid” (50) he says to them.

Thus, as a shepherd, spending time in *accountable prayer* before your Lord will surely change your perspective too. Bathed in the mercy and pleasure of the Father, you will begin to see what he sees, a people weak, terrified, and needing encouragement in their unbelief.

Question:

Further Discovery:

