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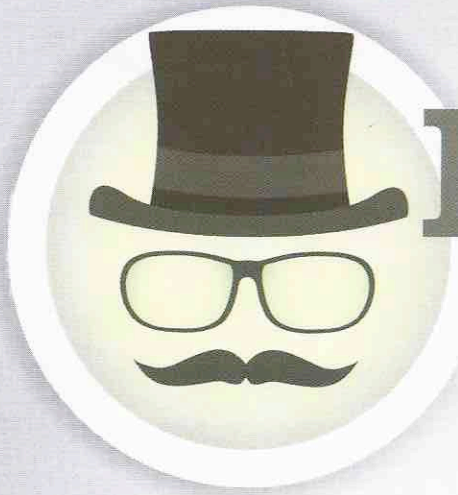
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MAN TO MAN

By Jeffrey Dean



Godly Accountability Required

While in high school, I wanted to pierce my ear. My dad was adamant that as long as I was in high school I'd better not put a hole in any of my body parts. So, once I arrived at college, I pierced my ear. My life, my ear, my freedom, right?

One of the biggest misconceptions most 18-year-olds have is that being a *legal* adult makes one a *mature* adult. Actually, the only big difference between your seventeenth birthday and your eighteenth birthday is that, starting with your eighteenth birthday, you get to go to jail with the big people if you mess up.

To save money when piercing my ear, I had someone in my dorm do it. I guess I should have paused to consider that allowing someone I barely knew to stick a needle through my skin in his dorm room probably wasn't the smartest move. Several nights later, after an all-night \$420 visit to the ER because of an infected ear, I found out the important principle that not all advice and accountability is wise. When it comes to receiving it, you have to choose wisely.

Several people in my life today hold me accountable. Some are family members and some are friends. Some are similar in age to me and some are older. They help me manage my time, push me to reach my potential, call me out when I appear to be straying spiritually, and pray with me and for me. Keeping me accountable isn't always comfortable or easy for me or them. However, these people are invaluable to me. And I hope I am the same for them.

I can't stress enough how critical it is that you surround yourself with people who will keep you accountable. The quantity of people is not as im-

portant as the quality. This role cannot be filled by just anyone. I am talking about the kind of accountability that isn't satisfied with yes or no answers, that goes beyond "I'm doing fine," and that will look you eyeball to eyeball and ask you the tough questions about your life.

Such counsel might not be easy to find, but I am confident that if you search for it, you will find it. Here are four principles to consider when receiving counsel from another:

1. Not all counsel is godly. Proverbs says that every word of God is flawless and that His words are like a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Proverbs also gives a warning never to add to or change the words God speaks to you through Scripture; otherwise, God will rebuke you and prove you to be a liar. Sometimes even those with the best of intentions can mislead you by misquoting or mistaking what the Bible says. The older you get the more you will see that there will almost always be a peer, coach, professor, or co-worker who claims allegiance to God but offers counsel contrary to that claim. As you receive counsel from others, always use Scripture as the gauge by which you test such counsel to determine whether it is of God or humans. Simply put, if a person's suggestions, recommendations, or condemnations aren't in sync with God's, then such counsel is wrong, no matter how popular, culturally relevant, or accepted the person.

2. Not all counsel needs receiving. You can't always control the counsel you hear,

but you can control the counsel you choose to take in and apply. Pray that God will guard your heart from hearing, receiving, and retaining ungodly counsel. Proverbs 1 tells us to let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance.

3. Some counsel will require humility. The older I get, the more I seem to meet people who have more life experience, more wisdom, and more discernment than I. And though their counsel has often left me humbled, it has also brought to my attention areas of my life that need addressing while equally pushing me to be a better person.

4. Godly counsel is second to God's counsel. God has given us the Bible as a guide for our lives. The writer of Psalm 73 understood that no counsel was more real and relevant for him than God's. Spend time in God's Word and you will grow in His wisdom and favor. The Bible might not specifically offer the proper steps to piercing your own ear, but it does offer the wisdom to help you make healthy life choices, including the right choice that just might help keep you from spending the night in the ER!



Jeffrey Dean is a pastor, international evangelist, and author. Jeffrey has spoken to more than 3 million people. He is the writer of several books, including *Watch This*, *This Is Me*, and his latest release, *The Graduate Handbook*. You can connect with Jeffrey at www.jeffreydean.com.