

BY CRAIG GROSS

with Adam Palmer



**WHAT HAPPENS WHEN GUYS
GET REAL, GET HONEST,
GET ACCOUNTABLE**



simply for students

BY CRAIG GROSS

with Adam Palmer



**WHAT HAPPENS WHEN GUYS
GET REAL, GET HONEST,
GET ACCOUNTABLE**

Group





YouthMinistry.com/TOGETHER

See-Through Life:

What Happens When Guys Get Real, Get Honest, Get Accountable

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Credits

Authors: Craig Gross and Adam Palmer

Executive Developer: Jason Ostrander

Chief Creative Officer: Joani Schultz

Editor: Rob Cunningham

Copy Editor: Stephanie Martin

Art Director: Veronica Preston

Production Artist: Brian Fuglestad

Project Manager: Stephanie Krajec

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PART 1:

FLIP THE SWITCH

(AKA, BEING OPEN IS A GOOD THING)

The world you're growing up in looks pretty different from the one I did.

When I was your age—which, honestly, wasn't all that long ago—it was possible to do something really stupid (and by “stupid” I mean, like, “over-the-top, beyond-your-dreams dumb”) and not have it affect your future too much. Sure, your parents would probably find out about it, and you'd get in serious trouble at home. You'd probably get grounded for a time, lose your TV or Internet privileges, or have your car taken away from you, but rarely would you have to worry about some poor decision-making skills on your part destroying your entire world and making the global population hate you.

In case you didn't know this already:
Those days are gone.

An even more sobering thought:
They aren't coming back.

This is a different world now, and it seems to be changing ever more rapidly the longer we're around. Thanks to the Internet, along with humanity's collective ability to carry a powerful and technologically innovative computer/camera/communication device around in a pocket at all times, your world is under more scrutiny today than ever before. All the instant connectivity at your fingertips, combined with the ability to share just about anything on a whim through social media, means

you have to be more careful about what you say and do than any generation before you.

These days, you just can't afford to do something dumb and have it plastered all over the Internet. Countless lives have been ruined, careers shipwrecked, trajectories altered, and futures abandoned because some teenager made a bad spur-of-the-moment choice and got in trouble either with the law or a social network.

In other words, the world you're living in is already open—much more than ever before.

So you have to live smart.

You have to embrace being open.

You have to *live* open.

What do I mean by that phrase, that you should be “living open”? Well, I sure don't mean you need to reflexively blare everything you do, feel, see, and eat through every social media platform you have an account with. I don't mean you constantly point your phone's camera at yourself and post your every waking moment through a series of selfies, because selfies can take you only so far.

In fact, what I'm talking about is the opposite of that. I'm not opposed to you having a picture of yourself; I'm just saying it's about time for you to be bringing another person or two into that picture.

I'm talking about making yourself accountable.

I'm talking about inviting one or two close friends into your world to help you live a strong life and achieve the many goals I hope you've set for your life—and so you can return the favor and do the same thing for them.

This is what I mean by living open. About being open. About embracing openness.

Now, before we can talk about being open, we have to make sure that what you hear when I say “be open” and what I mean are the same thing. Because right now, chances are good that they probably aren't. Maybe you, like a lot of people—if not most people—automatically think of something like “accountability” as a bad thing, like your parents holding you accountable by looking over your shoulder while you do homework or text your friends. This actually isn't the case! In fact, it isn't what I mean at all.

This might blow your mind, but it's true: Accountability is actually a *good* thing.

Let me repeat that, because it's important that you get it. And just to make sure you fully absorb this truth, I'm going to put it on a line all by itself:

Accountability. Is. A. Good. Thing.

One more time, just to make sure, and I'll make it even simpler. Tweet-sized:

ACCOUNTABILITY = GOOD

Now it's your turn. Fill in the blank:

ACCOUNTABILITY = _____

The more I've traveled and spoken about this idea of living an open life full of accountability, the more I've noticed that people automatically turn up their noses at just the idea of making themselves accountable to others. Mainly that's because when we hear phrases like "keep people accountable," they're inevitably tied to news stories about some CEO or investment banker or politician who did something illegal and now must be brought to justice or made to pay for the innocent, unsuspecting lives they ruined.

With those images in mind, we tend to think of accountability as some form of punishment, instead of what it actually is: a life-giving boundary, a necessity in

the modern world, a survivalist's backpack filled with a GPS unit, a box of Clif Bars, and a packet of waterproof matches that will keep you alive in the wilderness that is life.

So the very first step you must take to becoming open is to flip the switch that resides in your brain. You need to reframe this topic in your mind and start thinking about accountability in its true, positive light instead of the negative one that automatically springs to mind.

Being open isn't about restraining you or preventing you from doing something bad. It's about helping you do something good.

In fact, let's pause for a moment. Take a second to write down three things you think are good, and then write down a way that being open can be like each of those things.

3 THINGS THAT ARE GOOD

-
-
-

**HOW IS BEING OPEN
LIKE THOSE 3 THINGS?**

OK, so it probably isn't enough for me to just tell you that accountability is a good thing; I'm guessing you're interested in learning *how* it's good. I'm glad you brought that up! With that in mind, let's take a brief look at four ways being open is a good thing. Those four things are:

- Being open provides safety.
- Being open leads to depth.
- Being open allows freedom and liberty.
- Being open is necessary.

Got 'em? Great. Now that we have an overview, let's look at each one more in depth.

CHAPTER 1

BEING OPEN PROVIDES SAFETY

First off, let's define the kind of safety we're talking about here, because there are two different kinds. There's the smart, wise kind of safety—like buckling your seat belt when you get in the car or putting a protective case on your smartphone—and then there's the more reactionary, fear-based kind of safety—like never driving anywhere or having only a landline.

I'm talking about the first kind.

To me, the concept of safety has nothing to do with curling up under the covers and refusing to interact with the world at large. Nor does it have anything to do with keeping your mouth shut at all times so you don't unintentionally say something that might possibly make someone mad (though this might be a good strategy at times).

When I'm talking about the safety that accountability provides, I'm talking about the kind that sets you up with confidence so you can enjoy life to the fullest. This is the safety you feel just before you get strapped into a roller coaster: the comfort that helps you relax and enjoy the thrill of the ride because you know you're going to make it to the end all right.

We've all seen those movies or TV shows where a lost party of people is forced to wander through some mysterious wilderness or thick jungle trying to find an ancient or magical artifact, or trying to make it back to civilization. Inevitably, our heroes make their way through the dense foliage until they come to a rickety suspension bridge. You know the kind I'm talking about: the bridge made up of just a few ropes and some moldy wooden boards that somehow stretch across a scary-high drop (a drop that usually ends in a rushing river or pile of sharp rocks). Someone from the group will always test it out first, someone else in the traveling party will assure them it's safe, and then, when the person gets halfway across, a board will always break out from underneath their feet and fall down, down, down, taking forever to reach the bottom. Meanwhile, our hero looks on with wide eyes and held breath. Does the same fate await them?!?

Now, compare that kind of nerve-rattling, literally shaky experience from the world of fictional movies and TV shows to the types of bridges we actually experience in the regular world. From highway overpasses to interstate bridges to pedestrian footways in public parks, our world is full of bridges that we cross and *never think about*. That's how secure they are. That's how confident we are that these bridges will support us and carry us on our way without incident.

You may have heard about a 2013 incident from Washington state, when a semi truck carrying an oversized load of drilling equipment was traveling on Interstate 5, crossing the Skagit River on a bridge that had been recently inspected. Unfortunately, the truck driver accidentally made contact with the outside trusses that supported the bridge, causing a portion to collapse and plunge into the river below. Thankfully, no one was killed in the incident, though three people sustained injuries after falling into the river. The bridge was closed for about a month, disrupting the local economy and transit through that region.

The reason you may remember this incident is because it was news. Why was it news? Because bridge collapses in the United States—especially on well-traveled roads and interstate highways—are so incredibly rare. That’s how much we’ve come to depend on them and how much confidence we have in them. We don’t cross our fingers whenever we drive on an overpass. We don’t even pause before crossing to check it out with a cautious toe. We just keep doing whatever we were doing.

The rickety suspension bridge that always gives way in the movies? That’s a life without accountability.

The actual kind, the bridge with failures so rare that they’re news? That’s a picture of the safety provided by being open.

Accountability gives you unflinching safety and support, the kind of safety that lets you journey through life knowing that someone you love is backing you up, no matter what—and that you're doing the same thing for that person. No comfort compares to this kind of safety.

Now it's your turn. List five ways you can see accountability providing safety in your life:

A gray paper tag with a hole on the left side and a string tied through it. The tag has a numbered list from 1 to 5, with dotted lines for writing. The tag is slightly tilted and has a torn edge on the right side.

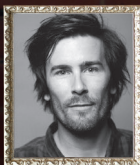
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

YOU LIVE IN A CRAZY, CRAZY WORLD. You can instantly connect with anyone you want, and you can share just about anything on a whim through social media—but that means you have to be more careful about the things you say and do than any generation before you.

You have to *live smart*. You have to *embrace being open*. You have to *live open*. And the best way to follow that path is to embrace the idea of accountability with other guys—something that sounds intimidating but is actually the key to living an amazing life!

Being open provides safety. Being open leads to depth. And being open helps you live a life of freedom and liberty. ***See-Through Life*** will help you discover how to get and maintain accountability, how to get involved in your friends' world, and how to get equipped to pursue honesty, courage, and community—all parts of true accountability.

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CRAIG GROSS has earned a reputation for boldly and courageously helping people pursue freedom, accountability, and personal integrity. He's the founder of XXXchurch.com, which provides millions of visitors each year with practical and spiritual solutions to pornography issues. He lives in Los Angeles, California, with his wife, Jeanette, and their children, Nolan and Elise.



ADAM PALMER is a freelance writer and author who has worked on over 30 books as a writer, co-writer, contributor, or editor, including all of the previous titles by Craig Gross. He has also written for stage and screen. He's been writing professionally since he was 17 and hasn't looked back since. He currently lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma, with his wife and five children (twitter.com/ThatAdamPalmer).



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