

Introduction

If you are reading this **Advocate Manual** you have probably been asked to be an advocate for someone seeking counseling through the Biblical Counseling Ministry at Summit Point Church. You probably have many questions, but first there are a few things you should know about Biblical Counseling.

The **mission** of the Biblical Counseling Ministry [BCM] is to return “soul care” to the church by helping some of the most hurting members of Summit Point through Gospel-centered counseling sessions. It is our **goal** to “equip the saints” (Eph. 4:12) in the process of counseling. We ask advocates to walk alongside counselees, providing long-term support, accountability, and encouragement. The BCM is committed to the local church and life in Christian community as the long term care provider of each individual believer.

We believe it is time to redeem the word “counsel” to mean **what God intended in Scripture**. Good Christian counsel, or **soul care**, is biblically based, balanced in truth and grace, Christ-centered, Spirit-led, and prayer saturated. It is counsel that brings about Christ-likeness, a quieted soul, and targets lasting heart change. It is much more than a counseling method. It is a cultural philosophy that should affect every part of body life in any healthy, growing church.

As a result, we require that each individual or couple coming to the BCM for help have an **advocate**.

We seek to have advocates who exemplify **Christ-like character qualities** and who have a sincere **love for God**. The advocate should possess a growing knowledge of the Word, a willingness to attend counseling, and a desire to grow and change with counselees. Finally, we ask that advocates commit to humbly walk beside the counselee(s) for at least six months following intensive or corrective counseling.

The Vital Role of the Advocate

We believe that the Lord has called you to be a **Proverb 17:17** kind of friend right now. It is an absolute privilege to be an advocate, ***standing in the gap*** for your friend or loved one in their time of need. You do not have to have extensive counseling training or schooling in dealing with “deep psychological issues.” If you have had training in biblical counseling, that is great; but it is not necessary to be an advocate. Sometimes, in God’s providence, He allows us to be trained in certain areas in order to help others. However, most of the time he allows us to help others in order to be trained ourselves.

You may ask, ***“Why me?”*** In His infinite wisdom, God has allowed you to be involved for this simple reason; He wants you to be the ***hands and feet of Christ*** and to ***grow more like Christ*** in the process. You will be taking up a burden that doesn’t belong to you and shouldering the weight at your expense for the benefit of someone else (Gal 6:1-2). Sounds a bit like our Savior, doesn’t it? Doesn’t it always seem that in the midst of life’s most difficult times (whether that is ours or someone else’s) God reveals our desperate need for Him most clearly?

Personal growth rarely happens to those who remain outside the context of community living, those who never reach outside themselves for the sake of someone else. Jesus exemplified and called us to a life of service. Perhaps this is why we are urged over and over in Scripture, ***“Love one another.”*** The world looks at this kind of care and is awestruck by the love and commitment of God’s community of people (John 13:35).

We realize this is a great sacrifice for you, but we believe that this could truly be a life-changing event for you, your family, and those you want to help. ***The thought of involving someone else in what has historically been a very private process is a significant paradigm shift for the “counseling culture” and even in the church. In our experience, involvement and investment of God’s community in counseling is not only more biblical but also more effective.*** While we recognize that requesting that counselees have an advocate in the counseling process is unique, we are convinced it is God’s design, and testimony after testimony speaks to the benefits for the counselee, the advocate, and ultimately the body of Christ as a whole. (See the chart at the end of the manual on “Benefit of advocacy in counseling”).

Preparing for Your Time with a Biblical Counselor

We want to provide you with profitable and practical information as you prepare for your time as an advocate. There are **three key** preparation activities:

1. Read through the rest of the advocate Manual. This will provide a good overview of your responsibilities before, during, and after your time with the BCM.
2. Please read the two chapters (listed below). We provide a web link to these excerpts at the end of this manual. These chapters succinctly communicate the target of our counseling and the importance of community in the change process.
 - *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, Chapter 4 "The Heart is the Target" by Paul David Tripp
 - *How People Change*, Chapter 5 "Change is a Community Project" by Paul Trip and Tim Lane
3. Pray! Pray for the couple, family, and/or individual you are caring for during counseling and for the body of Christ at Summit Point. Pray for the counselor, the apprentice, and any other specifics for this counseling session.

Your Responsibilities During Counseling

During your time with the BCM you will have a variety of opportunities to learn, grow, and serve. Besides communicating outside the counseling sessions to talk through homework, as well as pray and be together with the counselee, there will be three specific ways that we will ask for your help during your time with the BCM.

Intercessory prayer

"Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer." (Romans 12:11-12)

Our counseling team recognizes that we are absolutely dependent on God to provide hope and help for the people we serve. Therefore, we urge you to be in prayer, before and during our time together, in **four specific ways**:

1. Pray that the families and individuals that come will be **open and honest** about their situation.
2. That the counselees would be **receptive** to what God has to say in response.
3. That everyone involved in the counseling, especially the counselor, would have **wisdom and**

insight to understand the heart issue(s) that must be addressed.

4. That the time with the BCM would result in ***lasting change for the glory of God*** for everyone involved in the counseling process – including advocate(s) and counselor (John 15:8).

After formal counseling is completed, we encourage you to continue in prayer. Feel free to email us to updated prayer requests as needed.

Provide ongoing encouragement and insight

Proverbs 18:17 reminds us that there is more than one way of looking at things. Ideally, you are coming alongside someone you have done or will do life with. **You have insights into their life. Your perspective will be valuable in the sessions.** The counselor will likely look to you at times to share your perspective. To be clear, you are not a formal co-counselor but if asked, be ready to share thoughts about your friend or your own testimony to encourage them. If you are an advocate who has little experience with the counselee, your thoughts may be more related to the things you see/learn in our time together, or in your time with the counselee between sessions.

Hebrews 3:12-13 says, “Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another everyday; as long as it is called “today” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.” One of the points the author is making is that the body of Christ not only has the *responsibility* but also the *ability* to ***bring sight to areas of blindness*** in the lives of one another. We see that theme of preparedness again in Romans 15:14 and in 2 Corinthians 3:4-6. Remember the Holy Spirit is the counselor in the counseling room. Read through those passages as you prepare your heart. We need to speak the truth in love to each other so we do not fall away or find ourselves blinded by the deception that comes through sin. As a body we want to participate in what God is doing through His primary means for growth and change, the local church. You are serving in a unique way to ***bring hope and maturity in Christ*** to those who have lost their path or have been entangled with sins hindering their sanctification.

C.S. Lewis states, “*In each of my friends there is something that only some other friend can fully bring out. By myself I am not large enough to call the whole man into activity; I want other lights than my own to show all his facets.*” We resonate with the truth Lewis shares. Despite the staff’s training, giftedness, and experience as counselors, we still are not “large enough” to have the perspective that is afforded us through the body of Christ. As an advocate you bring a perspective from the lives, circumstances, relationships, interactions, and patterns of those you are serving that we simply would not have without you. ***We value the input you bring*** to the counseling experience, and invite you to bring those insights and questions to our time together in counseling.

Taking good notes and capturing key points

Not only does the advocate have the opportunity to bring encouragement and insights to the counseling process, they provide the critical ***follow-up*** between sessions, reminding the counselee(s) of the lessons learned. God’s Word says, “*Therefore I intend to always remind you of these qualities, though you know*

them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder . . .” (2 Peter 1:12-13) There will be a lot of information shared by both counselee and counselor that needs to be captured into a succinct set of notes for the purpose of drawing upon those insights in the months to come. **Bringing remembrance** to foundational/root issues, important principles, helpful diagrams, and impactful passages of Scripture helps to nurture the key truths gained while in biblical counseling. Your effort in taking good notes not only captures information, it also serves the counselee by helping them to fully engage in the verbal dialog without concern for “catching everything.” At the end of each session the counselor will communicate a summary and an action plan. At times, we use copies of the advocate’s notes to develop practical action steps for moving forward. Don’t be concerned about getting everything verbatim – be specific but stay focused. Try to capture patterns, heart issues, Scriptures, key phrases, and refrains of the conversations.

The Responsibilities of the Body of Christ

As a ministry of Summit Point Church, the BCM is constantly seeking to move counselees back into the community of believers. We seek to restore counselees to fellowship with believers and this will look different in each case. As you prepare for your time with the BCM, you may have been asked because you are a part of the counselee’s **Impact Group**. If you or your friend are not a part of an Impact Group, we encourage you to join one through this process. Your Impact Group can participate as appropriate by praying, and if needed by providing childcare or other practical needs. This is a great opportunity for the church to provide support through an Impact Group. Not everyone is comfortable about counseling at the Impact Group level and you may need to encourage your friend(s) to share prayer requests or needs at the Impact Group they are a part of. You should maintain discretion and confidences while prompting the counselee to be more transparent in the group.

After Counseling is Over

In an effort to prepare you for what to expect when formal counseling is completed, we would like to share some things you can expect after leaving the BCM, who to contact and when, as well as some additional training resources. While every situation is different, many people have found that there is a great deal of excitement and enthusiasm from the experience that carries over for a while. To some degree, the trial or conflict will likely temporarily subside. Regardless of any immediate relief, it is important for the counselee to continue **abiding** with Christ (John 15), **growing** in his or her ability to

take thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:4-5), and **entering** back into community through their Impact Group (Heb. 10:24-25). Assisting your friend in becoming actively involved in other people's lives both to serve and be served will be very beneficial. We would also encourage you to involve your Impact Group leader, Impact Group Coach, or family pastor in order to provide spiritual oversight for your situation. Several people who have been helped by the BCM or have had friends or family here have reported a regression in the counselee's experience somewhere around two months after completing formal counseling. It is critical at this juncture, whenever it may occur, that the counselee(s) do not isolate themselves. Proverbs 18:1 says, "Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment." As an advocate, your role becomes especially critical if this happens. You can **provide hope** by reminding the counselee(s) of key Scriptures that were shared during the time at biblical counseling (Rom. 15:4), reinforcing that spiritual growth is a process (Prov. 24:16), and encouraging them not to give up (Gal. 6:9). Enlisting the help of the pastor or Impact Group leader would also be wise. (Prov. 11:14)

At times, even with the help of others, the situation may continue to deteriorate to the point that you feel like you and/or your Impact Group leader need more help. Please don't hesitate to contact your counselor. We are happy to provide any counsel that will help equip you to be Christ's representative in the situation you are facing.

Some additional resources that we have found helpful for you as an advocate and in your own walk with God include:

- *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands* by Paul Tripp
- *How People Change* by Paul Tripp and Tim Lane

An Ambassador of Soul Care

As a result of your time with the BCM, and out of the overflow of your love for Christ and others, we desire for you to become an **ambassador** for the BCM. Ambassadors simply seek opportunities for others to be reconciled to God and each other (Matt. 5:24, 2 Cor. 5:14-21), and encourage others in your community do the same. Some of the ways "Soul Care" manifests itself are: personal investment in the lives of others, loving accountability, daily encouragement, and a deeper level of compassion. All of this is done with a balance of truth and grace (John 1:14) for the glory of God.

Much more than promoting the BCM however, we desire for you to live out the spirit of Biblical Soul Care in whatever community you are involved in at Summit Point. Wherever you are working for Christ around Summit Point, we desire you to **grow in disciple-making** through the spirit of Biblical Soul Care. If you know other leaders who are interested in the BCM and helping its mission, we would welcome the opportunity to speak to them. (Gal. 5:13-14)

As we mentioned above, there are some key benefits to advocacy in the counseling process.

Below is a list of some of those benefits.

Benefits to the Counselee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hope from a committed friend who is willing to walk through the experience with them• Continuity of counseling and help on the home front• Help communicating greater context, to bring to remembrance key issues and/or remind them of truth gained while in counseling• Freedom to be attentive without the need to capture every detail with a friend there taking notes.
Benefits to the advocate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deeper insight into the life of the person they love• Weekly direction for conversation and accountability• An opportunity to ask questions and receive insight into helping the person they love• An opportunity to fulfill the law of Christ• A practical way to apply the one-anothers of Scripture• An opportunity for further training/equipping• Personal growth in closing the gaps between knowing Scripture and living it
Benefits to the Counselor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Another perspective into life of the counselee• Built-in accountability for homework and application• Assistance in validating or clarifying insights in the life of the counselee and his community• Natural tie-back into the regular flow of discipleship at Summit Point