

Advocates in Biblical Counseling & Discipleship

The advocate model was first developed formally at Twelve Stones Ministries in Brown County, Indiana. You can go to twelvestones.org for testimonies that might give you more confidence in making this important decision. One example is below.

“Being an advocate has been very challenging at times, but the blessings the Lord has brought thru our commitment to Him and to the couples He has brought into our lives has been immeasurable!! Not only has He allowed us the privilege of having front-row seats in seeing His amazing healing power at work, but He has grown us immensely, both individually and as a couple. God is good!”

- Fred and Cheryl Adams

“Whatever I have given as an advocate, I have received so much more in return. Although I was not the focus of the counseling, God’s Word always accomplishes what it sets out to do and it is certainly at work in my life as well.”

- Mark and Molly Jo Nyman

Lasting change takes place in community.

Christians were never meant to live in isolation. In fact, God intended the community of believers to assist one another in making lasting change for the glory of God ([Romans 15:1-2](#), [Ephesians 4: 11-16](#), [Philippians 2:1-4](#)). Because we believe that transformational change happens in the community of believers, we ask that all counselees bring an advocate with them to their counseling sessions.

An advocate is someone who:

- loves God
- firmly believes in the sufficiency of God’s Word
- cares deeply for the counselee ([Proverbs 17:17](#))
- is available to attend counseling session with the counselee
- prays for and with the counselee before, during, and after the sessions
- reminds the counselee of what they were taught
- encourages the counselee
- holds the counselee accountable
- helps the counselee complete the assigned homework

Advocates are an amazing addition to formal counseling. They can be a life-giving part in the change process for the counselee as they walk through the valley alongside the hurting person.

If they have history with the counselee, they can provide important context that would otherwise be unavailable to the counselor.

Two additional notes on advocacy:

1. Our pastors/counselors will help with the selection of and give final approval to the advocates. We are looking to leverage the power of mature believers who will not judge but will intentionally pray, encourage, challenge, or even rebuke the counselee instead of being enablers, or flesh-sympathizers.
 2. As a general rule, first degree relatives (spouses, parents, siblings, etc.) don't make for good advocates. We have seen that people who live both roles struggle to remain objective which may hinder the counseling process. Again, our counselors will try discern with you if your initial choice is a good fit.
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What is the job/role of an advocate?

Besides meeting together outside the counseling sessions to review and work 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 as an advocate.

1. 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)

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.

2. 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 life with. **You have insights into their life. Your perspective will be valuable in the sessions.** The pastor/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. Sometimes counselees have isolated themselves so much that we have to assign an advocate who has little experience with them. In that case, 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 entangle 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.

3. 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** after an intensive or between corrective 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.