

# Parkside Church Biblical Counseling Advocate Manual

## *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 Parkside Church. You probably have many questions, but first there are a few things you should know about biblical counseling.

BC is a ministry whose mission is to return “soul care” to the church by helping some of the most hurting members of Parkside through regular counseling sessions. It is our goal to “equip the saints” (Eph 4:12) in the process of counseling. We train advocates to walk alongside counselees, providing long-term support, accountability, and encouragement.

BC 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 BC for help come with an advocate. During the application process we encourage our counselees to prayerfully consider who will serve in this capacity for them: a concerned friend, mentor, ministry leader, or family member.

We encourage counselees to seek out advocates who exemplify the character qualities they desire to develop 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.

## *Preparing for Your Time with in Biblical Counseling*

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 this document. This will provide a good overview of your responsibilities before, during, and after your time with BC.
2. We encourage you to read the books listed however there are two chapter excerpts that are particularly critical. 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 at BC and for the body of Christ at Parkside Church. Pray for the counselor, the apprentice, and any other specifics for this counseling session.

### *The Vital Role of the Advocate*

If you have read this far, 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? Get on your face and thank Him for this opportunity right now and embrace it as His perfect timing for you and those you love.

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 also believe you will not regret being a part of this life-changing process. 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 requiring counselee’s to bring an advocate into 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.

You may be asking, “What are the requirements, what do I have to do, how else should I prepare?” We will attempt to answer those questions in the next brief chapters. For now, we would like to thank you for considering this opportunity. You will play a crucial role in returning soul care to the body of Christ. We have seen it evidenced over and over again in the experiences of the advocates who have come before you and we look forward to the opportunity to serve you and serve alongside you.

The advocate model was first developed formally at Twelve Stones Ministries in Brown County, Indiana. You can go to [www.twelvestones.org](http://www.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

### *Your Responsibilities During Counseling*

During your time with BC you will have a variety of opportunities to learn, grow, and serve. There will be three specific ways that we will ask for your help during your time with BC.

#### *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 BC 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 leaving BC, we encourage you to continue in prayer. Feel free to email us updated prayer requests as needed.

“Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known” (Jeremiah 33:3).

### *Providing Insights*

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 counselor might 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 time we have together.

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.

### *Taking Good Notes*

Not only does the advocate have the opportunity to bring 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.

### *The Responsibilities of the Body of Christ*

As a ministry of Parkside Church, BC 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 BC, you may have been asked because you are a part of the counselee's Life Group. If you or your friend is not a part of a Life Group, we encourage you to join one through this process. Your Life Group can participate as appropriate by praying, and if needed by providing childcare or other practical needs. You should maintain discretion and confidences while prompting the counselee to be more transparent in the group.

Remember, the more people that "bear up under the burden" of those who need help, the lighter the load (Gal. 6:1-2). If there is anyway BC can help you in this process, please contact us at our office.

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
- *Relationships: A Mess Worth Making* by Paul Tripp and Tim Lane
- *Peacemaking for Families* by Ken Sande with Tom Raabe

### *An Ambassador of Soul Care*

As a result of your time with BC, and out of the overflow of your love for Christ and others, we desire for you to become an ambassador for BC. 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 BC however, we desire for you to live out the spirit of biblical counseling in whatever community you are involved in at Parkside. Wherever you are working for Christ around Parkside, we desire you to grow in disciple-making. If you know other leaders who are interested in BC and helping its mission, we would welcome the opportunity to equip your church body to live out the biblical mandate to serve one another in love (Gal. 5:13-14). Please check our website periodically for news and new equipping opportunities.

*Benefits of Advocacy in Counseling*

Benefits to the Counselee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hope from a committed friend who is willing</li> <li>• to walk through the experience with them</li> <li>• Continuity of counseling and help on the home</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
Benefits to the advocate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deeper insight into the life of the person they</li> <li>• love Weekly direction for conversation and</li> <li>• accountability An opportunity to ask questions</li> <li>• and receive insight into helping the person</li> <li>• they love An opportunity to fulfill the law of</li> <li>• Christ A practical way to apply the one-</li> <li>• anothers of Scripture An opportunity for further training/equipping Personal growth in closing the gaps between knowing Scripture and living it</li> </ul>
Benefits to the Counselor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Another perspective into life of the counselee</li> <li>• Built-in accountability for homework and</li> <li>• application Assistance in validating or clarifying</li> <li>• insights in the life of the counselee and his community Natural tie-back into the regular flow of discipleship at Parkside</li> </ul>

Benefits to the Local Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A person is trained to support a body member</li><li>• in a short period of time. Creates a support</li><li>• network for Pastors and ministry leaders,</li><li>• allowing them to focus on shepherding the</li><li>• entire flock built-in accountability for the church's counseling ministry Provides a testimony of love and commitment to one another and a watching world Creates a culture of obedience to the 40+ one-anothers of Scripture.</li></ul>
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