



**HARVEST**  
CHURCH

**Biblical Soul Care**

*Advocate Manual*

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## **Introduction**

If you are reading this Advocate Manual you have probably been asked to be an advocate for someone seeking counseling through the Biblical Soul Care (BSC) ministry at Harvest Church. This manual should help address most of your questions about advocacy, ***please take your time reading it carefully.***

We believe it's important to involve advocates to walk alongside counselees. An advocate, in most basic terms is described as someone who loves Jesus Christ and loves the person seeking counsel. He or she is important in the counseling process because they can provide long-term support, accountability, and encouragement.

Because we believe that advocacy is so important for the efficacy of the counseling process, we desire that each individual or couple coming to BSC for help comes 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 sometimes a 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 would submit to the counseling process and support the counselor. Furthermore, he or she 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 walking beside the counselee(s) for ***3-6 months during/following intensive or corrective counseling.***

## **The Vital Role of the Advocate**

We believe that the Lord is calling 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. 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? You should take some time to seek the Lord, thank him for this opportunity, 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 or 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 to “Love one another.” The world looks at this kind of care and is awestruck by the love and commitment of God’s people (John 13:35).

We realize this is a great sacrifice for you. However, we want to encourage you by letting you know that of the many advocates who served others, at the time of this writing, we’ve not found one who regretted it. 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.

We understand this may be new to you but 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. (See the chart at the end of the “Involving Community” section.)

You may be asking, “What are the requirements? What do I have to do? How should I prepare?” We will attempt to answer those questions below. For now, we would like to thank you for considering this opportunity. You could play a crucial role in returning soul care to the body of Christ. We have seen it before and are confident it’ll be true again. We look forward to the opportunity to serve you and ministry alongside you.

## Your Responsibilities in the Counselling Process

During your time with BSC you will have a variety of opportunities to learn, grow, and serve. 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 with BSC.

### **A - 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)*

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

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 BSC would result in lasting change in the hearts of everyone involved in the counseling process - all for the glory of God.

Even after the formal counseling process is finished, we encourage you to continue in prayer. Feel free to email us to update prayer requests as needed.

### **B - PROVIDING CONTEXT AND PERSPECTIVE**

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.** Likely, the counselor will 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 things you see/learn in our time together or in your time with the counselee between sessions.

*In The Four Loves, C.S Lewis said, "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.

### **C- PROVIDING ONGOING ENCOURAGEMENT AND INSIGHT**

*"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." (Heb 3:12-13 )*

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. 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.

### **D - TAKING NOTES AND CAPTURING KEY POINTS**

Not only does the advocate have the opportunity to bring insights to the counseling process, they also provide the critical follow-up after an intensive or between counseling sessions, reminding the counselee(s) of the lessons learned.

*“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 is more than capturing information; it serves the counselee by helping them to fully engage in the verbal dialog without the concern of “catching everything.” 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 Community of Believers & Soul Care**

You may be asking why community is so important and how exactly it intersects with the ministry of Biblical Soul Care.

There are four main things we want you to understand:

1) Advocacy itself is just a small part of what the life of the community of believers should look like. Romans 12 talks about us being members of one another (v.5) and goes on to say that we should rejoice and weep with those around us (v.14). All that to say that we need one another for life in Christ - God intended for us to be interdependent in community.

2) When someone is hurting they shouldn't leave the community to get help - the local church is God's chosen place for counsel and care. So, BSC and the community of believers aren't two separate places, they consist of a variety of wise counselors at multiple levels.

3) When we help someone to be reconnected to their main circle of influence in the community of believers, there shouldn't be a stigma attached to the person - we all need counsel and care at some point and we need to help each other understand that it is normal and good to seek counsel - the advocate's testimony of this truth and love for their friend will be a great reminder to others.

4) Lastly, when someone goes to seek counsel and care, the small group they were part of shouldn't abdicate responsibility for this person or couple but rather rally around them. Prayer, preparing meals, childcare, and many other ways can be practical expressions of Christ's love at a time of need and should be a regular occurrence in the community of believers.

Now, why do we tell you all this as an advocate? Because in the role of an advocate you can be the bridge between Soul Care and the rest of the body. You can rally people to pray for the hurting (be careful and use discretion as you share prayer requests...consult the counselee and or counselor if you are unsure of what to share). You can help organize meals, prayer times, childcare, and other things to lighten the load for the counselee.

We want you to understand that you can be a very critical piece in the growth and healing of the hurting person/couple you are considering to care for. 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 any way BSC can help you in this process, please contact us at our office.

## **Advocacy and Intensive Counseling Retreats**

If you are going to be a part of an intensive retreat, we would like to share some things with you regarding follow-up after the retreat.

You may ask, what should we (or I) expect after leaving BSC? Who do I contact and when? Where can I get additional training or helpful resources? While every situation is different, many people have found that there is a great deal of excitement and enthusiasm from the experience of the intensive retreat. This may carry 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 **being reconnected** to their community in their small 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 small group leader, coach, or family pastor in order to provide spiritual oversight for your situation (Prov 11:14).

Upon returning home, you (and the counselee(s)) should review the plan for next steps as it was established in the intensive retreat. This will provide you with guidance and direction as you seek to minister to your friend. Several people who have been helped by BSC or have had friends or family in Soul Care have reported a regression in the counselee's experience **somewhere around two months after completing an intensive or completing corrective 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 BSC (Rom.15:4), reinforcing that spiritual growth is a process (Prov. 24:16), and encouraging them not to give up (Gal. 6:9).

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 small group leader need more help. Please don't hesitate to contact the church office to get in contact with 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.

Here are some additional resources that we have found helpful for you, both as advocate and in your own walk with God:

- Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands by Paul Tripp
- Relationships: A Mess Worth Making by Paul Tripp and Tim Lane
- Peacemaking for Families by Ken Sande with Tom Raabe
- The Cross Centered Life by C.J. Mahaney

### **An Ambassador of Soul Care**

As a result of your time with BSC, and out of the overflow of your love for Christ and others, we desire for you to become an ambassador for BSC. 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 their 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 BSC however, we desire **for you to live out** the spirit of Biblical Soul Care in whatever community you are involved in at Harvest. If you know other leaders who are interested in BSC 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)

## **Benefits of Advocacy in Counseling**

As we mentioned above, there are some key benefits to advocacy in the counseling process. Below you will find a lit of some of those benefits.

<p><b>Benefits to the Counselee</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encouragement &amp; hope through a friend who is willing to walk alongside</li> <li>- Continuity of counseling and help on the home front</li> <li>- Provide greater context and background to the suffering or problem</li> <li>- Specifically remind with truths learned in the counselling process</li> <li>- Provide freedom to be attentive and not having to take copious notes</li> </ul>
<p><b>Benefits to the Advocate</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Deeper insight into the life of the person they love</li> <li>- Weekly direction for conversation and accountability with the person they love</li> <li>- An opportunity to fulfill the law of Christ</li> <li>- An opportunity to be equipped in speaking the truth in love</li> <li>- An opportunity to close the gaps between knowing and living scripture</li> </ul>
<p><b>Benefits to the Counselor</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Another perspective into the life of the counselee</li> <li>- Validating or clarifying insights on the life and community of the counselee</li> <li>- Built in accountability for homework and application</li> <li>- Natural tie-back into the regular flow of discipleship at Harvest</li> </ul>
<p><b>Benefits to the Local Church</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A person is better trained to support a hurting brother or sister</li> <li>- Another support network link for pastors and ministry leaders I established, allowing them to focus on shepherding the entire flock</li> <li>- Built-in accountability for the church's counseling ministry</li> <li>- Provides a testimony of love and commitment to one another and a watching world</li> <li>- Creates a culture of obedience to the "One Anothers" of Scripture</li> </ul>