

## **So you've been asked to be an advocate..... What does that mean?**

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 Stonebridge Biblical Counseling 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. Finally, we ask that advocates commit to humbly walk beside the counselee(s) for the time they are in active counseling (6-12 weeks).

While our hope is that most counselees will be able to ask someone from their Life group to be an advocate we realize that is not the case for everyone that needs counseling. **That is where you come into play. We will be matching you up, according to your time available, with the incoming counselees that do not have a current Life group.**

Why me?

You may be asking "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)

Preparation:

1. We encourage you to read the books listed, however below is a chapter excerpt and a message that speaks about the points behind Paul Trips "How people change" that are particularly critical. Change is a Community Project!

Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands, Chapter 4 "The Heart is the Target"  
by Paul David Trip [Link](#) Pages 13-20

"A Community Project" (book "How people change")

Message by Paul Trip [Link](#)

Your Responsibilities during counseling:

~ Pray: Intercessory Prayer

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 Counseling will result in lasting change for the glory of God for everyone involved in the counseling process.

"Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known" Jeremiah 33:3

~ Provide 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. To be clear, you are not a formal co-counselor but if asked, be ready to share thoughts or your own testimony to encourage the counselee.

~ Take Good notes

As the advocate you will have the privilege of being able to remind the counselee of the lessons they learned in the counseling room. 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 up by way of reminder..." 2 Peter 1:12-13

The counselor may even use the advocates notes to help them develop practical action steps for moving forward.

Advocate Benefits

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| Benefits to the Counseling process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ Hope from a committed friend who is willing to walk through the experience with them</li> <li>~ Continuity of counseling and help on the home front</li> <li>~ Help communicating greater context, to bring remembrance key issues and/or remind them of truth gained while in counseling</li> <li>~ 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 love</li> <li>~ Weekly direction for conversation and accountability</li> <li>~ An opportunity to ask questions and receive insight into helping the person they love</li> <li>~ An opportunity to fulfill the law of Christ</li> <li>~ A practical way to apply the one-anothers of Scripture</li> <li>~ An opportunity for further training/equipping</li> <li>~ 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 application</li> <li>~ Assistance in validating or clarifying insights in the life of the counselee and his community</li> <li>~ Natural tie-back into the regular flow of discipleship</li> </ul>   |
| Benefits to the Local Church       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ A person is trained to support a body member in a short period of time.</li> <li>~ Creates a support network for Pastors and ministry leaders, 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 40+ one-anothers of Scripture.</li> </ul>                                       |

Adapted from Harvest Bible Chapel – Garrett Higbee