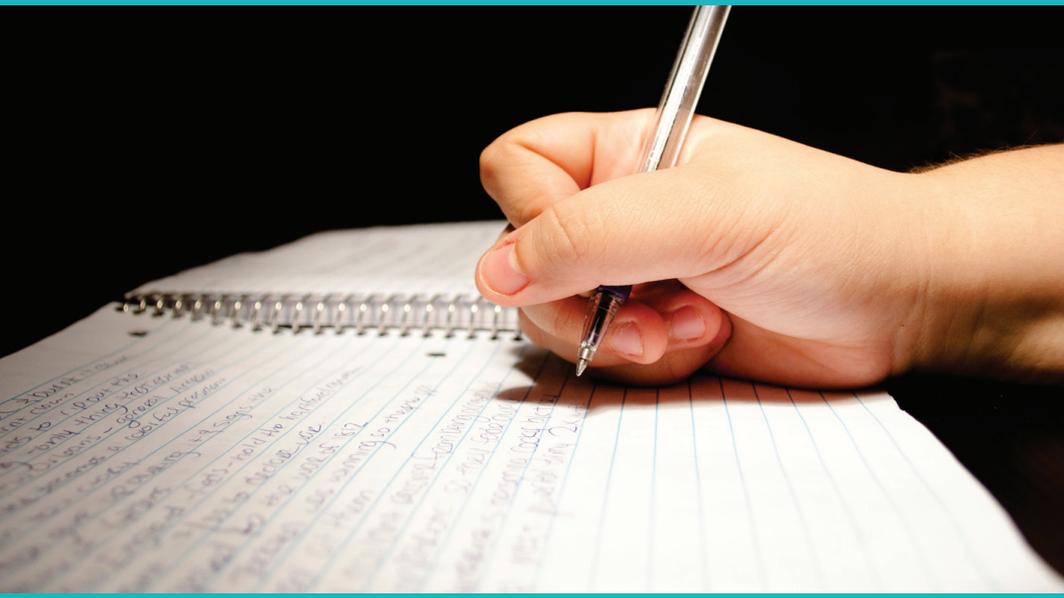


ADVOCACY 101 GUIDE



Micah Challenge →

WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

ADVOCACY IS THE PROCESS OF CHALLENGING OURSELVES AND OUR LEADERS TO CHANGE ATTITUDES, BEHAVIORS, AND POLICIES THAT PERPETUATE INJUSTICE AND DENY GOD'S WILL FOR ALL CREATION TO FLOURISH.

IT INVOLVES...

1. Transformation. We often refer to it as "Transformational Advocacy"
2. Examining our own attitudes and behaviors while challenging large systems and structures
3. Identifying the root causes of injustice.
4. Obtaining equal power for people who are often excluded from important decision-making.

WHO ENGAGES IN ADVOCACY?

Everyone holds a vital role in advocacy! Whether advocacy is practiced by people who are directly affected by injustice, people who partner with those affected, or people who work on behalf of those affected. Advocacy applies to everyone!

Since Transformational Advocacy involves examining our own behaviors and attitudes, each person has the ability to confront injustice and impact the world when they engage in advocacy.

WHY SHOULD WE ADVOCATE

1. Advocacy confronts injustice. Whether or not it is plain to see, injustice is a widespread issue that seeps into our individual lives, our communities, and our entire society. Advocacy confronts injustice by aiming to change the conditions that perpetuate injustice.

2. Advocacy works toward an environment where all creation can flourish; it works to restore healthy, thriving relationships between people and their environment (Isaiah 61, Luke 4:18-19, Isaiah 10:18, 58:67). This applies to our relationships with...

a. God, family, friends, coworkers, leaders, neighborhoods, schools, businesses, etc.

b. Health systems (physical, mental, and emotional) such as access to clean water, nutritious food, support systems.

c. Nature and the environment (having the ability to live, learn, and work in a place that is free from health hazards; being in an environment that offers protection and equality among all people regardless of race, gender, or income).

3. Advocacy acknowledges our interconnectedness. Our world is shaped by many components all working together and affecting how society functions. Countries impact larger social systems, large systems impact smaller communities, small communities impact individuals, individuals impact their communities, and the scenario continues. Everything we do, in one way or another, connects with the experience of others. When we advocate for justice, we are acknowledging that when one member suffers, we all suffer. When one member is honored, we all rejoice (1 Corinthians 12:26).

HOW DO WE ADVOCATE?

Advocacy can include a wide range of activities! It may look differently within each community depending on the issue.

Some examples include...



Reaching out to our elected officials - through writing letters, signing petitions, or visiting in person.



Starting a discussion group that focuses on a justice issue and challenges people to live more justly.



Challenging our own attitudes and behaviors that may be perpetuating injustice, like how you view the homeless or where you purchase your clothing.



Using social media to educate others and change negative attitudes toward oppressed groups.

Regardless of the activities we engage in, there are some natural steps and progressions that are involved in effective advocacy.



1. Identifying and educating ourselves (and others) about a certain justice issue (What are the larger systems that are involved in decisionmaking? How do my personal actions perpetuate injustice? What are the underlying causes of this problem?)

2. Planning and preparing a strategy for taking action (this includes research, critical thinking, and personal reflection)

3. Taking action (implement your plan for change, engage others, and let your actions be inspirational, wise, and passionate).

4. Evaluating your efforts (What were the outcomes? How did your actions affect others? What is the next step? Are there areas for improvement?)

STORIES OF ADVOCACY

In the Old Testament, God called Moses to confront Pharaoh (the political leader at that time) and free the Israelites from slavery. God didn't instruct Moses to go to the Israelites to comfort, feed, and clothe them. Rather, Moses was called to address the cause of the Israelite's continued suffering. Does this mean that God wasn't concerned about their immediate needs? Absolutely not! However, dismantling the systems and unjust policies that perpetuate hunger and suffering is what truly brings about lasting change for the oppressed.

During a time of civil war in Liberia, thousands of Christian and Muslim women came together and formed the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace, a rally movement known for advocating and bringing peace to their nation. These women engaged in nonviolent public protests – forcing Liberia's president to meet with them and agree to participate in peace talks. As the number of protestors increased, these women continued to apply pressure to their politicians and rebel warlords

until a peace agreement could be reached. In a few weeks, Liberia's ruthless president resigned, moved into exile, and a peace treaty requiring a transitional government was finally signed! Because each individual woman chose to speak up and advocate for peace, they were able to reach a turning point and change the conditions of their nation.

While these stories are great examples of advocacy, there are still many more ways that we can practice advocacy. Advocacy takes on many different shapes and forms depending upon the communities and issues on which we focus. Remember, anyone and everyone can engage in advocacy. Each person holds a vital part in restoring the larger picture of all creation to flourishing

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