

starting point

Counselor's Manual

	Page #
Why Counselor Training	2
Starting Point - start to finish	2
Meeting with a participant	4
- Leading someone to Christ	5
- Person Professes to Know Christ	6
- Baptism Questions	8
- Seek Community	9
- Serve	9
Counseling Scenarios	10
Biblical example for purity and holiness	13

Why counselor training?

1. We want you to feel confident in assisting someone in his or her spiritual journey, both in salvation and in the choice of a church home
2. The material is fluid. It will change depending on your personality and the dynamics at work in your counseling situation.

Starting Point from start to finish (details)

1. Several days prior to SP, we'll confirm that you can serve as a counselor; depends on number of people registered
 - a. Allows us to match you with certain individuals
2. Day of....after church and before coming into the cafeteria:
 - a. Check-in at the welcome table in hallway
 - b. Name tag that has your table number on it
 - c. Show sample name tag on screen
3. Locate your table
 - Table number tent
 - For participants
 - Participant books
 - Euangelion books
 - Pen
 - For counselors
 - Look for a Post-it-note with your name
 - Your back will be to the screen so the attendees won't have to turn around...you will 😊
 - Pen
 - Covenant Membership Card to be signed
 - Prayer of salvation card – if needed
 - **Bring your own** SP book – we will not supply new books every time; only if you lose it or we make significant changes
 - **Bring your own** counselor manual
 - If your people are at the table, introduce yourself, and then go through the serving line

- If you arrive before they do, wait on them, introduce yourself, and go through the serving line together
4. While eating, cover all the small talk. This will allow the participants to develop a familiarity with the counselors that they will meet with at the end of the presentation. Make the most of the mealtime.
 - a. Family
 - b. Work
 - c. Are you from this area
 - d. How'd you end up in Spartanburg
 - e. How'd you find HP
 - f. How long have you been worshipping at HP
 - g. Tell them about yourself, how long you've been at HP, and how you're connected and serving at the church
 - h. If you were talking with an obvious believer, ask about their spiritual passions or former place of service where they felt fruitful and fulfilled. There will be a place to write those on the Covenant Membership Card.
 5. Kids will be dismissed to childcare
 6. Starting Point Presentation
 - a. Our goal is to be so clear in the group presentation that the counseling time will prepare both the counselor in the participant for the conversation at that time. By illuminating as many unknowns as possible, we are hoping to build an environment that makes the counseling time a welcomed process.
 7. After the presentation, instructions will be given about meeting with a counselor and where to go
 - a. Its best to spread out around the room. Counselors should initiate where to go. Say something like "Let's step over here to this booth or table so we can talk." Stay in the cafeteria because it'll make it less intimidating and awkward for you and the person you meet with. The noise from other people talking provides a nice buzz around the room.
 8. When you are finished talking, have them complete the Covenant Membership Card. Sign your name at the bottom and write any notes that will help us know what their next step is. (Explain how to use the Covenant Membership Card)

9. When they have completed the card, walk with them over to the designated picture taking area. Pictures are for internal purposes only and will not be posted to any social media.
10. They are free to leave after their picture is taken.
11. A follow up email will be sent the next day providing next steps.

Meeting with a participant

Say something like the following or use another creative way to warmly greet participants...

“Thanks for coming to Starting Point today. It's a challenge to summarize all the events over the years in a class that lasts about an hour. But we hope it was a helpful time for you.”

Let them respond.

Move forward in the conversation...

“We believe that God never adds someone to the church without a purpose, so we are always encouraged every time someone moves toward church membership. As (name of person presenting) pointed to the three stick figures in the workbook, were you able to identify which one represents where you are.”

Depending on what they say will determine the next step.

Leading someone to Christ

If they want to receive Christ, help them understand what we have already emphasized during the presentation using Euangelion. The gospel is about believing that Christ was cursed so the curse of sin would be removed from them. Then share a basic prayer that people have found helpful through the years to put their thoughts into words. The prayer is only a guide. What makes the prayer powerful is that their trust and affections are focused on God. The following prayer will also be available for the starting point class.

“Thank you God for loving me – and inviting me to have a relationship with you. I admit that I have sinned against you. I believe Jesus is the Son of God who died on the cross and rose from the grave so that I can be forgiven of my sin. I open my life to you God and ask that you send the Holy Spirit to come into my heart and be the leader of my life. In Christ name I pray, amen.”

After an initial reading of the prayer with the participant, you might want to say something to them like this:

“Please let me know how I can serve you best at this time. Would you like to read that prayer to God as I listen, or would you like to read it to God in the privacy of your own heart and mind?”

In any event, whether they read it publicly or privately, after they conclude, then you as a counselor offer to pray with them, thanking God for His love and salvation, praying for His strength to begin walking with Christ.

Next Steps

- 1- explain baptism
- 2- talk community – list of small groups will be available for you to give them
- 3- talk about serving to help them connect and meet others
- 4- complete the Covenant Membership Card...it'll become official when they are baptized
- 5- bring them to designated picture area. Pray with them.

Person professes to know Christ

If the participant professes to know Christ and desires to join Hope Point, then simply say to them,

“We believe that God is honored every time a believer confesses that Christ alone is the hope for salvation. We do that every time we sing and pray. We also believe that we become more effective in speaking for Christ, the more times we profess our faith. So let me ask you:

Would you share with me at what point, or what season of life, God enabled you to understand and accept the gospel. And in your response, would you share with me in a brief sentence what you have come to understand what the message of the gospel is?”

Note: *Listen for some biblical language where faith in Christ is their hope. But be mindful that there are two types of salvation stories. Some meet Christ in a dramatic event. Others come to Him through a long process.*

Works oriented....If their story is obviously works oriented, then you can address that with a comment something like this:

“If I am hearing you correctly, your primary hope for God accepting you is your efforts to do the right things. Am I right in saying that?”

Give them a chance to process that and respond.

There is obviously a need at this point to review the gospel with them and to help them see that what they said (about salvation) is not what God is saying. God says that it is placing your trust completely in what Christ has done for you rather than what you do for Christ.

If the participant simply does not grasp the truth of the gospel, you might want to say something like this:

“This is what I’m sensing. God is at work in your life. And this is exciting. But again, this is too important to rush at this time. I think the best way I can serve you is to meet again, after you have time to read Euangelion again, looking for the only answer that God has provided for your salvation. Is this the direction you would like to go in, or do you wish to talk more at this time?”

The following statement comes from Summit Church in Raleigh:

It is a very hard thing to turn people away from being members of our church, but you have to remember it is for their benefit that we turn them away now. If we allow them to become members and they are living in sin or disbelief, then we risk them persisting in this manner forever, and with our approval.

Next Steps

If solid testimony move on to:

- 1-baptism
- 2-community
- 3-serve

If they simply do not grasp the gospel:

- 1- be graceful
- 2- IF YOUR SCHEDULE ALLOWS...offer to meet with him/her during the week to talk further about what it means to trust Christ. You’ve already built some relational capital with the person. If you simply cannot meet with the person, please let us know
- 3- If they choose not to pursue membership at this time, indicate that on the Covenant Membership Card in the counselor’s notes.
- 4- Write his/her name on the Covenant Membership Card, your name on the Covenant Membership Card, and make a note in the counselor’s notes section

Baptism Questions

If the participant has placed their faith in Christ and desires church membership, then ask them about baptism:

Ask them if they have publicly professed their faith in Christ through baptism, after they placed their faith in Christ.

Baptism "YES" ...ask them to tell you about their baptism experience. Then move to the next steps:

1. Complete the Covenant Membership Card
2. Bring them to designated picture area
3. A follow up email will be sent from the staff
4. They are free to leave

Baptism "NO" ...If they have not been baptized, then help them see again what was covered earlier in the class about baptism. That baptism, first, is our opportunity to show that we have been buried with Christ - we have let go of our old life (going under the water shows that our old self (that felt no need for God) that self died. And was buried with Christ who died for the way we lived. And that baptism, second, is our opportunity to confess that just as Christ was raised from the dead, He has given us a new start (represented by us coming out of the water)

Infant Baptism:

The Elder Body of Hope Point Church has prayerfully and deliberately considered the question of baptism and, specifically, the form and timing of baptism as a prerequisite to becoming a covenant member of Hope Point. We affirm and ratify this statement to summarize our view on this important question and to set forth how we believe this issue should be treated in our church body.

We believe that the better view from scripture is that believers in Christ should be baptized by immersion as an act of obedience following their profession of faith in Christ as their personal savior. Regardless, in the desire not to exclude those who have genuinely accepted Christ as their savior but who experienced prior baptism in the Protestant faith (either as an infant or as part of a confirmation process), we accept into covenant membership those who were baptized prior to their profession of faith provided:

- 1) they have expressed a genuine profession of faith,
- 2) they acknowledge that baptism prior to a profession of faith in Christ is not regenerative, and
- 3) they affirm that they are bound by their conscience that their prior baptism is biblically valid.

Hope Point Elders

***As with all covenant members, involvement in the life of Hope Point helps us observe their commitment and faith. We recommend a waiting period of two to three months for the prospective covenant member to pray and consider baptism by immersion. A follow up conversation from a staff member or elder will take place before the covenant membership is approved.

Next Steps

- 1- Depending on their response to being baptized will determine the next step.
- 2- **Special note**...see counseling scenarios on page 10

Seek Community

Encourage the participant to connect with other believers in community. "Life is better connected and discipleship happens best in relationships."

If they would like to connect with a group:

1. Invite them to try out your group.
2. Tell them about connection opportunities like "Group Link." Group Link provides the opportunity to meet some small group leaders, learn more about small group life, and connect with a group. It takes place in August and December after the service.
3. Website....Check out the "Join in Community" under the "Next Steps" menu tab on the church website for a list of all the groups we currently offer.
4. Attend church-wide fellowships when they are offered.
5. Note...most groups do not meet consistently during the summer months.

Serve

Finally, encourage the participant to devote their life to serving God – especially serving in the church where they worship.

“Test drive” a service area. You wouldn’t buy a car without first test driving it, so take a couple of weeks to see what all is involved in a particular service area.

Ask the participant:

- “How did you serve at your last church?”
- “Did you find serving in that area fulfilling? Would you like to serve in role again?”
- “Is there an area you would like more information about?”
- Encourage them to check out “Serve” under the “Next Steps” menu tab on the church website. There they will find opportunities that are best suited for them.
- They can also send request to receive more information about particular areas.

Next Steps

1. On the Covenant Membership Card, there is a place for them to indicate some service areas they’d like more information about.

Counseling Scenarios

1. What if they are not ready to become a covenant member?

If they are not ready to become a covenant member at this time, ask them if they have unanswered questions or if anything is keeping them from taking this next step. (Do not pressure them.) Allow them to keep attending at their own pace.

- a. Let them know that when they are ready to become a covenant member they will need to contact the church office.
- b. They will receive a follow up email from the staff.
- c. There is no need for them to have their picture taken and they are free to go.

d. COUNSELOR...write his or her name on the card, write your name on the card, and write a few notes in the counselors box so we'll know how to proceed.

2. What if their testimony is solid, they've been baptized by immersion, and they desire to become a covenant member?

Have them complete the Covenant Membership Card and walk them over to the designated picture area. Afterwards, they are free to leave. They will receive a follow up email from the staff.

3. What if their testimony is solid, they want to become a covenant member, and they express a desire to be baptized?

If baptism is their next step, have them complete the Covenant Membership Card and indicate that in the counselor's box at the bottom of the card. Feel free to ask them why they have never been baptized.

- a. Let them know their membership will become official when they are baptized.
- b. Remind them when the next baptism will take place. (This is covered during the presentation)
- c. Bring them over to the designated picture area.
- d. They are free to leave after their picture is taken.
- e. They will receive a follow up email from the staff.

4. What if they were baptized as an infant, give a solid testimony, display a regenerate life, desire to become a covenant member, but do not believe they need to be baptized by immersion?

- Review what was taught during the presentation.
- Order of baptism in workbook on pages 12 – 13
- You could say something like the following:

“You have the opportunity to share your testimony that you came to Christ 10 years ago.”

- Don't view baptism as being a new believer. Someone said the following to a counselor in a Starting Point class, “Can I have a private baptism because I do not want people to think I'm a new believer.”
- Jesus did it because it's right in the Father's eyes

- In obedience, you'll increase the faith and zeal of others
- Baptism does not save us. Its going public with your faith.
- Be sensitive without compromising.
- Encourage them to think and pray about being baptized by immersion. Look at what Scripture teaches about it.
- Have them fill out the Covenant Membership Card but indicate they were not baptized by immersion after coming to Christ. COUNSELORS...make a note of it in the counselor notes

Pastoral staff and elders will follow up with individuals who were baptized as infants.

5. What if the person you are talking with indicates that he/she is in a dating relationship?

Discernment: If the person is in a dating / engaged relationship, ask how he or she is pursuing purity and holiness; ask about their living arrangements; address any indication of sexual impurity whether married or single (premarital sex, pornography); make the following statements:

- Do you want to be new in this area of your life? 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:20
- If God is moving in your heart and life you want to pursue holiness
- Baptism won't make sense to you or others if you are not pursuing holiness.
- Baptism symbolizes death to self and being raised in newness of life - Romans 6:4
- You'll enjoy baptism a lot more if you wait and allow us to help you work these issues out. We want to help maximize your joy.
- Your next best step is to wait and continue to meet with me or someone we believe can help you experience freedom in this area of your life.

Engaged / dating couples –

- Is living together or being sexually active the most honoring way to pursue marriage?
- Marriage is sacred and points to something permanent – Christ's Church (Ephesians 5:21-33)

- If you are currently living together or “frequently” staying together under the same roof, do you commit that one of you will make arrangements to live in another location? (if engaged until wedding day) **What’s the plan to make this happen?** It will seem like an inconvenience, but compared to what Christ went through to save us, it’ll be worth it.
- Your next best step is to wait and meet with me or someone we believe can help you experience freedom in this area of your life.
- Jesus said,

“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and **teaching them to obey** everything I have commanded you.” *(not just learn it, but obey it)*
- **Stress this**- you’ll enjoy baptism a lot more if you wait and allow us to help you work these issues out. Your joy will be increased and your witness will be stronger.

Biblical examples for purity and holiness

1. Matthew 5:8 – Jesus said, “Blessed (happy) are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”
 - a. The reward of a pure heart is to see God
 - b. "Pure in heart" refers to spiritual integrity.
 - c. How does purity make us happy? Joy of a cleansed life – we’re released from the fear of judgment and the emotional impact from guilt and shame.
 - d. An unclean heart is ugly to God. The filth of self-centeredness and moral impurity is gross in God’s eyes. Guilt is realizing that we just participated in something that is opposite of everything God is – pure, holy! But nothing pleases God more than to remove our guilt and cleanse us from impurity.

- e. Confession paves the pathway to purity.
- f. Unfortunately many try to live at peace with sin while still identifying themselves as Christians.
- g. What does it mean to see God? You don't see Him with physical eyes but with spiritual ones. You begin to comprehend Him and become aware of His presence. **In Jesus, God makes himself visible.**
- h. 1 John 1:9 - If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.
- i. James 5:16 - Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.
- j. Proverbs 28:13 - Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

2. John 4 – Jesus’ encounter with the woman at the well.

- a. 4:16-18 Jesus confronted her about her living arrangements
- b. 4:28 “left her water jar and went back into the town” – that’s a big deal; her life was changed
- c. 4:39 “Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony.” Her witness was strengthened because she led the entire village to Jesus.

3. 2 Timothy 2:22

- a. Run from – “Flee youthful passions”
- b. Run to – “pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace.”
- c. Run with – “along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”

4. Good intentions will never overcome a bad location. “Flee from youthful temptations.” 2 Tim. 2:22

5. If you take care of the way things look, you take care of the way things are. “Avoid even the appearance of evil.” 1 Thess. 5:22

6. Some things are worth the wait. Some things are not worth the guilt. “Stolen bread eaten in secret is sweet, but afterwards it turns to sand in the mouth.” Proverbs 20:17

7. Warnings against premarital sex:

- a. It creates a false sense of intimacy – sex before marriage convinces a couple they are closer than they really are...you cannot build a Godly relationship based on sin
 - b. It is unkind to a future spouse – don't assume you'll marry the person you are currently dating...if you breakup they will one day become someone else's wife
 - c. It affects marital intimacy through mental scars – many Christians struggle with intimacy in their marriage because of memories or experiences they have previously had.
 - d. It burdens the heart with fear – fear of getting caught, pregnant, disease, girls fear inadequacy...that is not true love
 - e. Opens the door for future immorality – if we grow up saying yes to everything vile, it'll lead to immoral thoughts, actions...learn to resist now so you will have power when tempted later
8. God's commands are never given to restrict our joy but rather to maximize it. He restricts our choices to maximize our pleasure.