



PRIMER 6

TRADITIONAL ADVOCACY

SUMMARY:

In Matthew 10:16, Jesus called us to be "wise as serpents and innocent as doves."

Learn how to use "serpent power," or strategies borrowed from secular advocacy, to effectively influence your members of Congress.



TRADITIONAL VS. FAITH-ROOTED ADVOCACY

Primer 6 is the first of a three-part series on traditional and faith-rooted advocacy tactics.[†] This series will equip you to effectively use both "serpent power" strategies, borrowed from traditional advocacy, and "dove power," the unique influence we have as followers of Christ.

SHEEP, WOLVES, SERPENTS, AND DOVES



"Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." —Matthew 10:16 (ESV)

When Jesus sent His disciples out to proclaim the good news to Israel that His kingdom was within reach ("at hand," in Matthew 10:7), he made a profound statement about their identity and the tactics they should use.

[†] World Vision advocacy trainer, Alexia Salvatierra, has contributed heavily to the content in this series. Her book, *Faith-Rooted Organizing: Mobilizing the Church in Service to the World*, is an excellent resource for those who want to learn more about these principles.



Jesus' instruction reflects two foundational truths that must guide our advocacy:

- 1 Jesus expects us to achieve His mission differently than others achieve theirs.

We are sheep, not wolves. We are to go about our mission together (in our “flock”), led, protected, and cared for by our Shepherd. Sheep are not predators; they are neither fierce nor feared. Therefore, we do not succeed with speed, strength, or cunning schemes. We win by listening to Jesus, following His lead, and trusting in His provision.

- 2 There is more than one type of power.

Snakes and birds may be enemies, but Jesus acknowledges the unique assets of each and encourages his disciples to leverage those strengths in their mission. In advocacy, secular approaches can be wise, powerful, and effective. Still, as followers of Christ, we also have access to a different kind of power—the influence that comes from a God who acts on behalf of those He loves and who rules over all governing authorities.

SERPENT POWER

We can engage in advocacy that's "wise as serpents" by applying tactics from traditional advocacy. Traditional advocacy often expects legislators to be motivated by their desire to maintain their offices. It relies on one or more of the following forms of influence:

- 1 **WEALTH.** There's no getting around it. People with money—investors, large employers in their district, campaign contributors tend to get the ear of legislators faster than anyone else.
- 2 **NUMBERS.** When large numbers of voters and constituents are vocal about a particular issue, members of Congress pay attention.
- 3 **INFLUENCE.** It doesn't always take a large show of force to get a legislator's attention. Sometimes one person, if they're the right person, can change their mind or move them to action.

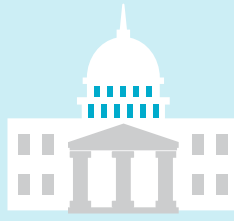
Traditional advocates often refer to policymakers as “targets,” treating them as such—pressuring them to support specific policies through repeated and escalating activities. Typically, if legislators respond to this type of pressure, they do so because they have to, not necessarily because they want to. Sometimes, that's the best possible outcome.

The standard vehicles used to influence legislators include calls, letters, visits, hearings, newspaper opinion pieces, press conferences, social media, and local events.



WHAT

YOU WILL
ADVOCATE FOR



WHO

IS INVOLVED IN
THE PROCESS



HOW

YOU MOVE THEM
TO ACTION

THE FIVE Cs OF INFLUENCE

To successfully influence your legislator over time, you'll need to develop a clear plan that identifies **WHAT** you will advocate for, **WHO** you will involve in the process, and **HOW** you will move them to action. Use the following "FIVE Cs of Influence" to help develop your plan.

1 CONCERN

What is your legislator concerned with? How can you present your issue in a way that aligns with their concerns? How can your request appeal to their self-interest?

Frame your issue as an opportunity for positive press in their district and adjust your request to any limitations they might face from a powerful constituency or an upcoming election. Determine what is reasonable and feasible for your legislator to do in the scope of external pressures or their local context, and do your best to position your request in a way that will help them.

For example, if there are struggling farmers in your congressional district, your member of Congress may find it risky to speak publicly about international food aid policy, but they may be willing to lobby their congressional colleagues privately and still help you achieve your goals.



THE BOTTOM LINE

Your legislator will be more supportive of your cause if you can answer this question: **"What's in it for them?"**



2 CASE

What’s the case for the action you’re requesting? How can you make this case in a way that appeals to your legislator’s concerns and passions?

When you advocate with World Vision, we’ll provide you with resources to help you make a general case for the issue. Still, you’ll need to do some research to determine how to best apply the general talking points to your specific member of Congress so that they are persuasive.

For example, if your legislator actively champions paid family leave rights for mothers in the U.S., you should appeal to her knowledge and passion in this area when asking her to take greater leadership in advancing global maternal, newborn, and child health programs. Highlight any linkages or similarities in the policies as well as support from local healthcare officials she may work with.



THE BOTTOM LINE

Your legislator will be more supportive of your cause if you can answer this question: **“Why should this matter to them?”**

3 CONSTITUENCY

What constituencies will you involve to show relevant support for your cause?

Your members of Congress were elected to represent a specific constituency, so make sure to involve that constituency when making your case. The more constituents that participate—and the more diverse that group of people is—the more persuasive you’ll be.

For example, invite other community groups or leaders to participate in a meeting with the member of Congress or bring signed letters or a petition with you to demonstrate broad support for your request. Local Rotary or Lincoln clubs, business leaders, the Chamber of Commerce, pastors and other faith leaders, veterans, nonprofit leaders, or university experts in a related field are great constituents to involve. Consider who would have something relevant to say about the issue and invite them to participate.



THE BOTTOM LINE

Your legislator will be more supportive of your cause if you can answer this question: **“How many constituents want your legislator to act on this issue?”**

4 CONNECTION

Aside from their constituents, who else does your member of Congress listen to?

Research potential influencers with connections to your member of Congress. They may not be constituents, but they still might have the ear of your legislator. Consider how you can involve the congressperson's campaign donors, spouse or family members, close friends, or other popular figures to elevate your issue's importance.

For example, you may be able to convince a prominent business leader or pastor to write an op-ed in support of the issue, and then share that article with your legislator. Or perhaps you can enlist someone who knows the legislator's spouse to make them aware of the need for a particular policy.



THE BOTTOM LINE

Your legislator will be more supportive of your cause if you can answer this question:
“Who does your member of Congress listen to?”

5 COMMUNICATION

How can you communicate your message? What different methods can you use?

If you think your legislator needs some convincing, you may need to pace your communication and stage aspects of your message over time. Consider the tools available to you and determine which are most strategic for each stage.

For example, you may want to generate some visibility of your issue in the media and in softer forms of communication before pursuing an in-person meeting. Mobilize a call campaign at your church (we can provide a call script!) to show constituent support, gather signatures for a petition or have constituents sign letters. Submit a letter to the editor of your local newspaper that references your member of Congress by name (their staff scan the news for mentions of their boss!). Involve those other influencers you've identified to “till the soil” before you get ready to make a direct ask.



THE BOTTOM LINE

Your legislator will be more supportive of your cause if you can answer this question:
“What methods will I use to communicate my request effectively?”