



# PRIMER 7

## FAITH ROOTED ADVOCACY I

### SUMMARY:

In Matthew 10:16, Jesus called us to be "wise as serpents and innocent as doves." As a follower of Christ, you can use "dove power" to effectively influence your members of Congress. Use this guide to explore one component of dove power: prayer.



PRIMER ISSUE

7

FAITH-ROOTED ADVOCACY I

## TRADITIONAL VS. FAITH-ROOTED ADVOCACY

**Primer 7 is the second of a three-part series** on traditional and faith-rooted advocacy tactics.<sup>†</sup> The 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. Primer 6 introduced Matthew 10:16 as a foundational verse for our approach to traditional and faith-rooted advocacy:

*"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)*



### DID YOU KNOW?

#### NEARLY 90% OF CONGRESS PUBLICLY CLAIMS FAITH IN CHRIST.

Over 50% identify as Protestant Christian and about 30% as Catholic. Less than 5% claim no religious affiliation at all (Pew Research Center). This represents a powerful opportunity for Christian advocates to mobilize our leaders to end global poverty.

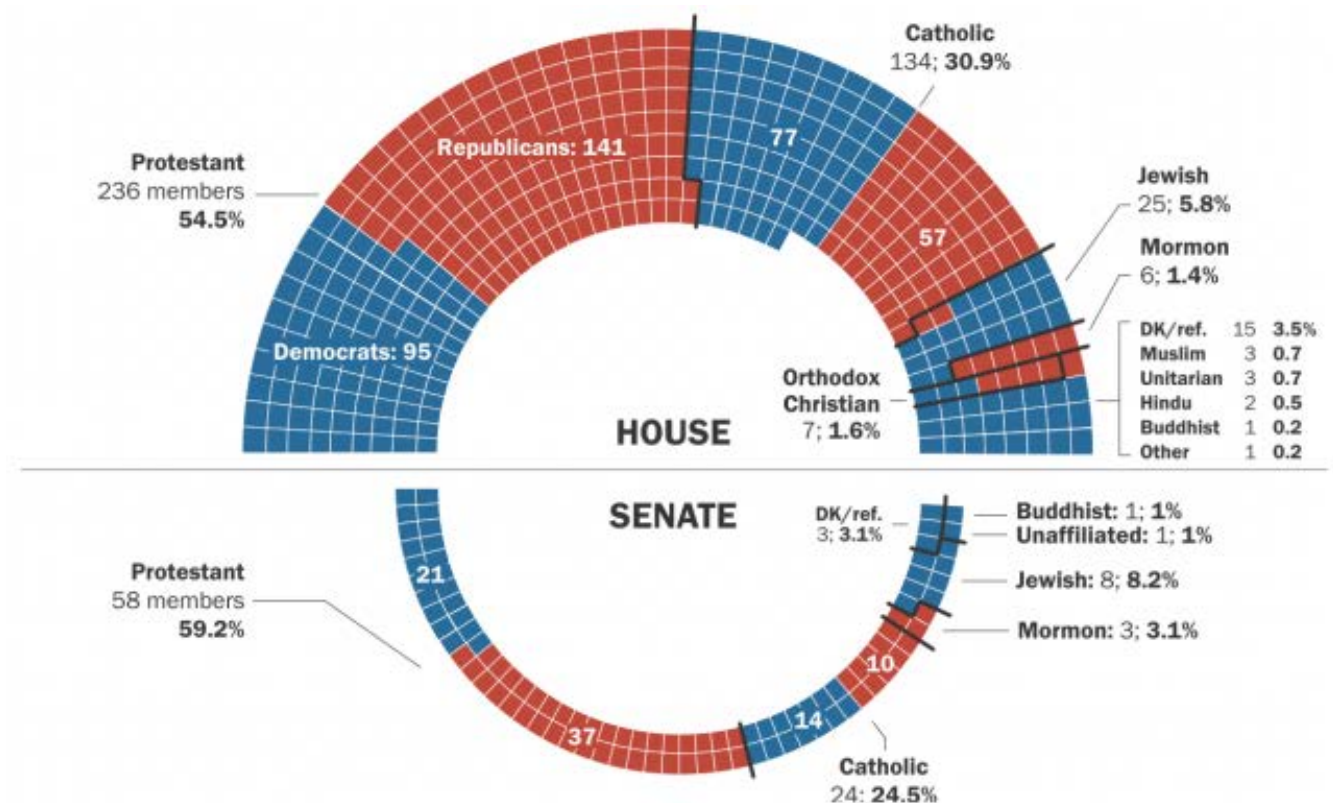
<sup>†</sup> World Vision advocacy trainer, Alexia Salvatierra, has contributed heavily to the content in this series. Her book, *Faith-Rooted Organizing: Mobilizing the Church in Service to the World*, is an excellent resource for those who want to learn more about these principles.



## DOVE POWER

While the traditional view of advocacy recognizes that legislators will be motivated by their desire to maintain their office, faith-rooted advocacy understands that they have other motivators too.

### THE RELIGIOUS MAKEUP OF THE 117TH CONGRESS



NOTE: Figure may not add to 100% or to subtotals due to rounding. Figures for Democrats include two independents who caucus with Democrats. Source: Figures for Congress based on Pew Research Center analysis of data collected by CQ Roll Call, reflecting members of Congress to be sworn in on Jan. 3, 2021. "Faith on Hill: The religious composition of the 117th Congress" PEW RESEARCH CENTER



Religious or not, the Bible teaches us that those who hold positions of power have been given their authority by God:

*“...for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God.” —Romans 13:1 (NRSV)*

This means the Christian advocate has a partner in God—we recognize that He can motivate members of Congress more ably than we can, His Spirit can influence their hearts, and His Word can move them to action in ways traditional advocacy may not.

In faith-rooted advocacy, legislators are not targets—they’re human beings who need our ministry. Our “ask” is not primarily an action, but rather the cultivation of an ongoing relationship. And this relationship is not merely transactional. It should be sincere, rooted in the desire for the well-being of the legislator, their staff, and those impacted by the policies you advocate for—even if you disagree with their political views.

Approaching your legislator as a spiritually motivated human being, you are freed to relate to them as a person of faith, and to create room for God to influence their hearts in ways that traditional advocacy tactics won’t. This is what we refer to as *dove power*.

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**Dove power advocacy has three primary components:**

- 1 Prayer**
- 2 Pastoring the powerful**
- 3 Prophetic call**

In this primer, we’ll examine prayer more deeply, and we’ll explore the role of pastoring the powerful and prophetic call in Primer 8.



## AS ONE VOLUNTEER ADVOCATE PUTS IT:



*“At first, I put a lot of pressure on myself to convince my representatives to ‘do something.’ But God totally changed my heart and perspective. He helped me see that I wasn’t going to advocate for his ‘favorites.’ I would be sitting across from them too. If God’s desperately in love with each of us, we’re all his number one. With that in mind, I could show up to the meetings without an agenda to promote, but instead with a genuine desire to reflect God’s love and compassion for the people in the room and the people around the world.”*

## PRAYER

Prayer is an essential aspect of faith-rooted advocacy because it's an essential aspect of the Christian life. Through prayer we prepare our hearts for the work of justice, we invite God's guidance and presence, and we create space for God to "accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:20, NRSV). Prayer must not only be offered for you as an advocate, or for the outcome you wish to achieve. It must also be for the elected official with whom you're developing a relationship. Prayer in advocacy can take many forms.



### **PRIVATE OR PUBLIC PRAYER FOR LEGISLATORS**

We encourage you to offer to pray with your legislator or their staff when you meet with them. Always ask them if they would want or appreciate it, and never force prayer if it would make them feel uncomfortable. We often find that they eagerly accept prayer and welcome the supportive gesture, in contrast to the pressure or manipulation they might be receiving throughout the majority of their day. In fact, some World Vision advocates have moved staffers to tears as they have prayed for them, with staffers sharing how much they needed it in that moment.

You can pray publicly (out loud) with your member of Congress or their staff in a meeting, or you may feel led to keep the prayer private and silent. Consider assigning one person in your group the role of discerner, whose responsibility during the meeting is to remain silent in prayer, discerning what might be under the surface of comments made by the legislator and if you should make any adjustments to your meeting plan in light of what God shows you.

Regardless of whether your prayer for your legislator is public or private, it should always remain sincere and never be used as a tool to manipulate them indirectly. Pray for their well-being, for God's presence to renew them and guide them, or for whatever else they share they need.

*Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine. —Ephesians 3:20 (NRSV)*

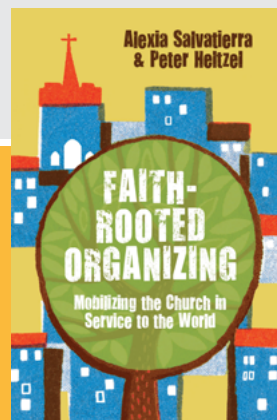




## PUBLIC PRAYER FOR WHAT'S ENVISIONED

Prayer is as effective in public as it is in private. In her book, *Faith-Rooted Organizing*, Alexia Salvatierra recounts a compelling story about a group of advocates working to influence a local policy. They attended city council meetings every week and used the public commentary period to raise their concerns. They carefully crafted talking points to send a common and clear message, but had no success. Then, one week, they decided to invite God into the process at a new level. Each one of their leaders used their three minutes of public comment at the podium to pray. They prayed for the poor, for the community, and for the city council—however they felt called to pray. When the legislation passed, a journalist asked a council member (who had previously been opposed to the measure) why he had voted for it. The council member responded that he could not take being prayed for one more week! The group's prayers reached beyond his armor to the talking points and penetrated his heart.

How will you incorporate prayer into your advocacy—not as a box to check off because it's the "Christian" thing to do, but as a vital, sincere, integrated way to invite God into the process? How will you ask Him to make a way where there may not be a way? Seek out others in your church or community who are gifted in intercession to accompany you with prayer throughout your advocacy, and then watch for God to work!



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