

Advocating for Your Team as a Leader



Capacity: Leadership

Leadership carries a profound responsibility—not just to accomplish organizational goals, but to steward the people entrusted to your care. One of the hallmarks of effective, God-honoring leadership is advocacy: speaking up for, defending, and promoting the welfare of your team. Advocating for your team is more than a managerial duty—it is a biblical mandate rooted in stewardship, justice, and love.

Scripture consistently emphasizes God’s concern for those who are vulnerable or in need of support. Leaders who prioritize advocacy honor God by reflecting His heart and fostering an environment of trust, respect, and mutual empowerment. Colossians 3:23–24 reminds us:

“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.”

Advocacy is part of working “heartily” for God—it ensures that your team is seen, heard, and equipped to succeed.

BIBLICAL PRECEPTS FOR ADVOCACY IN LEADERSHIP

A. Protect the Vulnerable

Proverbs 31:8–9 urges leaders:

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

Advocacy requires protecting those who may be overlooked or underrepresented, ensuring fair treatment and justice.

B. Lead with Servant-Hearted Intentions

Mark 10:42–45 emphasizes servant leadership:

“Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant...even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.”

Advocacy is an expression of serving others—elevating the team above personal ambition and authority.

C. Encourage and Build Up

1 Thessalonians 5:11 instructs:

“Encourage one another and build each other up, just as you are doing.”

Leaders advocate by affirming strengths, addressing challenges, and promoting growth opportunities.

D. Promote Justice and Fairness

Micah 6:8 reminds leaders:

“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

Advocacy involves ensuring fair treatment in opportunities, recognition, and accountability.

E. Speak Truth in Love

Ephesians 4:15 teaches:

“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.”

Advocacy is most effective when it balances truth with love, protecting relationships while pursuing justice and growth.

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF ADVOCACY FOR LEADERS

1. Know Your Team

Advocacy requires understanding your team members' strengths, needs, and aspirations. Leaders cannot effectively advocate without insight into individual roles and contributions.

2. Prioritize Relationships

Trust is foundational. Team members are more receptive to advocacy when they know their leader genuinely cares for their well-being and development.

3. Be Proactive, Not Reactive

Effective advocacy anticipates challenges, identifies opportunities, and addresses inequities before they escalate.

4. Align Advocacy with Organizational Goals

Promoting your team should enhance both individual growth and organizational success, demonstrating that advocating for people and results are complementary, not conflicting.

5. Communicate Clearly and Respectfully

Advocacy requires diplomacy, clarity, and integrity to ensure the message is heard and taken seriously without creating tension or conflict.

6. Maintain Humility

True advocacy lifts others rather than yourself. Leaders model Christlike humility by prioritizing team needs over personal recognition or advancement.

BEST PRACTICES FOR ADVOCATING FOR YOUR TEAM

A. Identify Strengths and Achievements

Document and share the contributions of your team members. Highlight achievements in performance reviews, meetings, or organizational reports.

Practice: Maintain a “team wins” log and use it to advocate for recognition, promotions, or project opportunities.

B. Provide Growth and Development Opportunities

Advocacy includes ensuring team members have access to training, mentorship, and challenges that build skills and confidence.

Practice: Recommend team members for new responsibilities, leadership training, or stretch projects.

C. Address Challenges and Obstacles

Speak up when systemic or organizational barriers hinder team success. Protect team members from unfair treatment, bias, or excessive workload.

Practice: Intervene with management or HR when necessary, framing discussions around fairness, efficiency, and long-term team development.

D. Celebrate Publicly, Recognize Privately

Advocacy often includes both public affirmation and private acknowledgment. Public recognition enhances visibility, while private encouragement builds morale and trust.

Practice: Acknowledge contributions in meetings while writing personal notes of appreciation or encouragement.

E. Practice Consistent Presence

Advocacy is ongoing, not situational. Regular engagement demonstrates genuine commitment to the well-being and growth of the team.

Practice: Schedule one-on-one check-ins, listen actively, and offer feedback and guidance consistently.

F. Speak Truth with Love and Courage

Sometimes advocacy requires difficult conversations. Speaking truth in love ensures fairness without alienating others or creating conflict.

Practice: Use Scripture-informed principles and respectful communication to present solutions and support team needs.

G. Pray and Seek God's Guidance

Advocacy is most effective when rooted in prayer and discernment. Leaders should seek wisdom for timing, words, and actions.

Practice: Begin advocacy efforts with prayer for guidance, favor, and discernment, trusting God to direct outcomes.

BENEFITS OF ADVOCATING FOR YOUR TEAM

1. Builds Trust and Loyalty

Team members who feel protected, seen, and supported are more likely to trust their leader and remain committed to the organization.

2. Enhances Performance and Engagement

Advocacy demonstrates that leadership values contributions and potential, motivating team members to give their best effort.

3. Strengthens Team Culture

A leader who consistently advocates sets a precedent for fairness, encouragement, and mutual support within the team.

4. Encourages Growth and Development

Team members are more likely to pursue professional and spiritual growth when leaders actively support their progress.

5. Protects Against Burnout and Disillusionment

By ensuring team members have resources, recognition, and fair treatment, advocacy reduces stress and increases morale.

6. Promotes Organizational Success

Teams supported and empowered by leadership are more innovative, productive, and resilient.

7. Honors God and Reflects Christ

Advocacy rooted in love, integrity, and service demonstrates God's principles in action, serving as a witness to His kingdom in the workplace.

ASK YOUR MENTOR

1. How do you balance advocating for your team with organizational priorities?
 2. What strategies help protect team members while maintaining fairness to others?
 3. How do you handle resistance or pushback when advocating for someone?
 4. How do you cultivate a culture where team members feel safe to share needs or concerns?
 5. What biblical principles guide your advocacy efforts?
 6. How do you recognize when to intervene and when to empower team members to advocate for themselves?
 7. How have you grown as a leader through advocating for your team?
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Creative Connection

Picture a shield held at the front of a formation—absorbing pressure, deflecting unfair blows, and creating space for others to advance. How does this image reflect a leader’s role in advocating for their team? What story, image, or example came to mind for you?

PERSONAL INVENTORY

Self-Evaluation

Rate yourself 1–5 (1 = rarely true, 5 = consistently true):

I actively seek to understand my team members’ strengths, needs, and aspirations.	
I advocate for team members’ development, recognition, and fair treatment.	
I communicate concerns and recommendations clearly and respectfully.	
I balance team advocacy with organizational goals and priorities.	
I model humility and Christlike service in my advocacy efforts.	
I address obstacles proactively and fairly.	
I pray for guidance and discernment in advocating for my team.	

Alignment

How do these principles of advocacy, protection, and representation align with what you were taught about leadership, loyalty, and speaking up for others growing up?

Context

In your current environment (workplace, church, family business, or community), what expectations exist around self-promotion versus team advocacy? Where might standing up for your team feel risky or discouraged? What is the personal or professional cost of advocating on their behalf?

Lingering Questions

What aspects of advocating for others—timing, tone, influence, or boundaries—still feel unclear or challenging? What questions remain as you consider using your voice and position more intentionally?

Take-Away

What is one insight from this article that will change how you speak for, protect, or create opportunities for your team this week?

DO

Reflect and Journal

Reflect on recent leadership experiences:

Where have I effectively advocated for my team, and where could I have done more?

How do my actions reflect servant leadership and God's principles?

What obstacles have I encountered, and how can I approach them differently with wisdom and humility?

Journal prayerfully, seeking insight, courage, and discernment to become a more effective advocate for your team.

Action Steps

1. Identify one or two team members who could benefit from advocacy in recognition, development, or protection.
2. Pray for wisdom and guidance in approaching advocacy.
3. Plan practical steps: recommend opportunities, address obstacles, or publicly acknowledge contributions.
4. Implement advocacy actions with humility, integrity, and love.
5. Reflect on the outcome and adjust practices for continued improvement.

Practice or Role Play

If applicable to this lesson, role play a practice from this article with your mentor.

SOURCES & RESOURCES

- Holy Bible (ESV, NIV, NKJV)
- John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*
- Ken Blanchard & Phil Hodges, *Lead Like Jesus*
- Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*
- Henry & Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*