

Training for Altar Counselors

There are four necessary tools for one to be a successful Altar Counselor: 1. a positive attitude; 2. Love for souls; 3. training; 4. a checklist of items to discuss; and 5. a warm, friendly smile.

As an Altar Counselor you have the responsibility of welcoming to the Family of God brand new babies. You work in God's delivery room, taking the infant in your caring hands. The approach one takes toward this introduction can often determine the growth which a New Convert will attain. The purpose of each function of the New Convert Care Department is to help the New Convert develop roots.

The Approach to New Converts

When someone is baptized or receives the Holy Ghost, the Director of New Convert Care will designate an Altar Counselor to counsel that person. He will assign men to men and ladies to ladies. There will be times one altar counselor may work with a husband and wife.

It is important for the Altar Counselor to set the proper atmosphere for the meeting. The Church will attempt to provide a comfortable office environment that can be used to talk with the New Convert.

Strike up a conversation with the new convert as you are going to the office. If the new convert has time, show them the areas of the church that he/she might need or will be interested in, i.e. nursery if they have children, pastor's office, and youth center if they have youth, etc.

Find out the new convert's religious experience. You do not want to criticize that experience but you might be able to use when talking about church attendance, Bible reading, etc. It is important to move the new convert from religion to the truth and his/her religious background will help you to understand their thinking/biases.

Altar counselors need to be at the altar praying with people, especially visitors. Altar counselors have to be faithful to this position and realize they might have to delay any plans they have like fellowshiping. The altar counselor should consider inviting the new convert to lunch, supper, especially if they are meeting others for fellowship.

Altar counselors need to greet those they meet with and if not counseling after service tries to talk with the new convert. Even though parents raise the newborn, a doctor's job is not finished at delivery so it is with the altar counselor. It is impertinent that the new convert does not feel like a prize that was won and now he/she is sitting on the shelf receiving no attention from the one who appeared to care.

After an individual has been baptized or has received the Holy Ghost and has been assigned to an Altar Counselor by the Director, that Altar Counselor will go to the person while they are still in the altar area and introduce themselves as an Altar Counselor of the Church. With a smile, they will then say, "I would like to get some information from you. Would you mind joining me in the office?" This is to be done even before the final Amen of the service. If the Counselor waits, the New Convert may have to leave for some reason.

When you arrive in the designated office, several things are essential in your own attitude. First of all, smile! Second, begin with a prayer of thanksgiving. Take their hands in yours and rejoice with them over what God has done. Third, take your time, but by the same token, don't cause the New Convert to feel that you are wasting their time.

The first responsibility is to use the Altar Counselor's Checklist which tells you exactly what should be covered. It is imperative that you get the New Convert's name, address, phone number and all other relevant information. You are to then begin the process of reviewing their experience with God. You will talk about repentance, baptism in the name of Jesus and the infilling of the Holy Ghost. Go over each item of the checklist, making notes as necessary to their responses. Allow time for them to ask questions. Further training will be provided on how to deal with some questions.

Your responsibility will include introducing the New Convert to various ministries to the Church in which they might be interested. If they have teenage children, or are young themselves, they will be interested in knowing about our Youth Ministry. If they are a young couple with children, they will want to know about Sunday School and the Children's Ministry of this Church. If they have special needs that the New Convert Care Director or Pastor should be aware of, please note these on the Altar Counselor form.

You will also be responsible for providing the New Convert with several items: a packet that has been prepared that will include a booklet designed for New Converts, a prayer clock, the Pastor's card, a card containing key phone numbers, an introductory cassette tape by the Pastor, a growth diary, and a Bible if they do not own one. Depending on the time and the person you are dealing with, the amount of time spent in each counseling session will be 15 to 25 minutes.

Dealing with Questions

Questions are welcome opportunity to discover the concerns of a New Convert, or of anyone else. Do not allow questions to intimidate you. Simply learn to deal with them from a scriptural perspective. Some questions should not be dealt with in this setting; mainly questions concerning holiness, as well as theological questions that go beyond the basics of repentance, baptism, the Holy Ghost and daily Christian living.

The session should always end with prayer. Again, take their hand (if you are comfortable doing so) and pray for them. Call their name (be sure to get this right) and of family members. Pray for their special needs. Conclude by asking them to call you if they have a need.

Exhibit D
Altar Counselor Job Description

Job Description
Altar Counselor

I. SUMMARY OF AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY: To obtain information about the new convert at the altar and counsel them, assisting them in their new walk.

II. DUTIES INCLUDE:

- A. Praying with prospective new converts at the altar.
- B. Introducing oneself to the new convert that the New Convert Care Director assigns one to counsel with and get acquainted with the new convert.
- C. Prepare a New Convert Report. Don't be prying but get as much information as possible.
- D. Counsel the New Convert one-on-one going through the prepared check list. This will be done in an assigned room in a comfortable setting. As much as possible, use scripture verses to discuss things.
- E. Give the New Convert the prepared packet and any other material so assigned.
- F. Discuss the Discipleship classes the church offers.
- G. Contact the New Convert within two days by telephone or personal visit.
- H. Place all paperwork in the designated area for the New Convert Care Director.
- I. Be an example in prayer and praise, church attendance and bringing guests to church. God loves faithfulness.

III. ACCOUNTABLE TO: New Convert Care Director

IV. EVALUATION: Quarterly by the Pastor and Director. We will jointly assess any changes that may be needed in the job description, as well as additional personnel that may be required.

I HAVE READ THE JOB DESCRIPTION AND UNDERSTAND ITS RESPONSIBILITIES AND THE THINGS FOR WHICH I AM ACCOUNTABLE. I AM COMMITTED TO SERVING IN THIS CAPACITY TO THE BEST OF MY ABILITY.

SIGNATURE

I COMMIT MYSELF TO OFFERING THE SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE NECESSARY FOR YOU TO DO THE JOB, TO WHICH YOU HAVE COMMITTED YOURSELF. I HAVE UTMOST CONFIDENCE IN YOUR ABILITY TO DO THE TASK WHICH HAS BEEN DELEGATED TO YOU.

SIGNATURE

