

WHAT IS AN ADVISOR: VISION STATEMENT

On the night before his Crucifixion, Jesus met with his disciples in the upper-room to share with them a final Passover meal. Knowing that this evening would be his last and foreseeing the pain and the confusion that his disciples would soon be experiencing, Jesus spent much of that evening comforting his disciples with simple but profound words of great intimacy and power. In this bitter-sweet farewell address (that wends its way from the 13th to the 17th chapter of the Gospel of John and that is referred to by theologians as the upper-room discourse), Jesus promises his disciples many things: chief among them that he would not leave them as orphans but would send them another Comforter (that is, the Holy Spirit) who would be with them forever (14:16).

In the original Greek, the word here translated as Comforter is *parakletos*: a legal term that means, literally, “one who is called to the side of.” Of the many possible English equivalents for this word, the most common are comforter, counselor, advocate, helper, and encourager. At the root of all these words is the image of a person (the *paraklete*) who sees a fellow human being in need. We might imagine that human being sitting in a chair with his head in his hands. He is troubled, confused, perplexed; he needs someone to stand beside him: to defend, to explain, to comfort, to advise. The *paraklete* senses this, and he is drawn to the side of the troubled person. If he is a lawyer (an advocate), he will take this person’s side in court; if he is a friend, he will comfort and encourage; if he is a teacher, he will instruct and explain; if he is a therapist or social worker, he will give counsel and advice. In many of these instances, he may even literally put his arm around the person and speak words of kindness and hope into his ear.

In the spiritual life of every Christian, it is the Holy Spirit who serves as a comforter, a counselor, an advocate, a helper, and an encourager.

In the academic life of the HBU student, it is the academic advisors, who is best poised to come along side our students in the same way.

Comforter:

Students at HBU are very often troubled and overwhelmed. They need someone to speak to them a word of comfort, to tell them that it will be OK, to lift their sights to a higher vision of what is to come: in short, to give them hope.

Counselor:

Students very often need good advice about everything from their emotional to their academic to their spiritual lives. We can’t answer all of their needs, but we can listen, we can sympathize, and we can share from our own life struggles and decisions.

Advocate:

Students often feel that the whole “establishment” (from the registrar to the business office to the faculty) is out to “get them.” Let us be the one who stands up for them, who takes their side, who is willing (when appropriate) to intervene.

Helper:

Students often feel “lost in the shuffle,” confused by all the many rules and procedures and protocols. Let us be the one who helps to walk them through the system, who guides them in the right path, who reminds them of deadlines and potential problems.

Encourager:

All students, even those who seem to have everything in control, need, now and then, a word of encouragement. Let us be people who notice and celebrate and affirm, who congratulate our advisees when they do well and applaud them when they persevere.